POSITIVE EXPERIENCES OF WORKING IN ACADEMIA: REFLECTIONS ON A HIGHER LEARNING INSTITUTION

by

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Submitted in accordance with the requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF LITERATURE AND PHILOSOPHY

in the subject

CONSULTING PSYCHOLOGY

at the

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

SUPERVISOR: PROFESSOR M J TERRE BLANCHE

January 2019

Declaration of Originality

I, Molebogeng Kalija Makobe-Rabothata (Student number: 4559 563 1), declare that the dissertation, "Positive experiences of working in academia: Reflections on a higher learning institution", hereby submitted to the University of South Africa for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy and Literature in Psychology, has not been submitted by me for a degree at this or any other university; that it is my work in design and execution and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references..

Molebogeng Kalija Makobe-Rabothata

Signature: …… Date:……..

Dedication

To the memory of my grandfather, Masome Serojane Mahlase. Through your hard work and sacrifices, you broke the circle of poverty in our family by educating all those that came before us. It is our responsibility as the continuing generation to carry on what you have started…

To my children, Wanani and Modiba Rabothata. The sky is not the limit if you can go to the moon…

Acknowledgements

To my promoter Prof M. J. Terre Blanche, I appreciate your guidance throughout this journey. Thank you for your critical input and for not giving up on me.

Prof S. van der Westhuizen, thank you for being patient and facilitating my growth to think and write at a higher level!

Prof L. J. Baloyi, ke leboga our academic engagements, your critical feedback and for always reminding me to recognise, honour and write about my cultural heritage and experiences.

Prof M. B. Ramose as the saying goes: *Rutang bana ditaola le se ye natšo badimong*. I believe I still have a lot to learn from you. Thank you for being an intellectual reservoir and my living ancestor!

The University of South Africa, thank you for granting me a Unisa post graduate bursary that assisted me in my journey to finish my thesis.

Mr Henry Matjila, I could not have done this without your assistance. Thank you for always being my brother and my 'personal librarian' that could not say no to any of my inconvenience library requests.

Dr Martha Lane, thank you for your prompt and professional editing of this thesis.

Ms Laura Schultz, thank you so much for your assistance with the graphical work!

My parents, Dishegong and Mammeshwane Makobe, you have always been supportive of my ambitions. Some of them have faded along the way and this one like many others has materialised…Ke leboga go menagane. Bana ba Kanyane le Ngwamorei!

My children, Wanani and Modiba. All these years, you have learned to share Mummy with her laptop, books and article papers. We are finally done guys!

My husband, Padime Rabothata, I do not know how you keep up with such an ambitious partner. Thank you for everything.

My siblings, Leja, Fonka and Tebogo and Masome, you have been my pillar of strength and have accommodated my family more than I could have imagined. Thank you bana ba Mphele le Moshopyadi!

To my ex collegues at Unisa, Department of Psychology and Industrial Psychology, thank you for your support. I have bothered some of you in one way or the other and you never gave up on me. You were always ready to assist. I really appreciate the support that you have provided.

To all the individuals that participated in my research, I could not have written this thesis without you. Thank you for being sources of knowledge and for sharing your experiences with me.

Abstract

The primary aim of the study was to explore positive experiences of academic employees working in an academic environment with specific reference to an Open Distance Learning (ODL) institution. The study was further envisaged as serving as the foundation for future studies which aim to develop a measuring tool for understanding positive experiences of working in academia. A qualitative approach was used to answer the research question by adopting a case study method that allowed for an in-depth study of understanding positive behaviour. A total of 12 academics were selected purposively to participate in the study. In-depth face-to-face interviews were used to gather information about the positive experiences of working in academia. In line with Seligman's (2000) integrated model of happiness, a happy academic was described through the adoption of (sometimes contradictory) metaphoric themes. The main themes identified were: the *mother hen* role, *creating positive spaces, it is not a bed of roses*, the *just and unjust world* and us versus them.In a meta-reflection on the research, contradictions were revealed in the theoretical approach adopted in this study, the literature reviewed, the empirical research and pragmatic considerations. As a result, a deconstruction of understanding positive experiences of working in academia by applying *Lekgotla* as an indigenous South African model was conducted. Healey's (2011) notion of *transformative dialogue* and Bujo's (1998) model of *palaver* were used as part of the framework within which Lekgotla was contextualised to understand positive experiences of working in academia. In conclusion, as an alternative, higher learning institutions (HLI) could adopt *other* ways that are different from Western ways of understanding the authentic experiences of diverse people in an African university. This could be done through a process of what Smith (2012) described as "considering carefully and critically the methodologies

and methods of research, the theories that inform them, the questions which they generate and the writing styles they employ" (p. 41). She refers to this process as decolonisation. According to her, decolonisation offers an alternative way out of colonialism since it exists as a different, oppositional way of knowing.

Keywords: higher learning institution, open distance learning (odl), positive experiences, policies in higher learning institutions, qualitative approach, diversity, indigenous knowledge, lekgotla, metaphors, decolonisation

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Research Orientation

"Life is what happens when you are busy making other plans."

John Lennon

Introduction

The research project that this thesis is based on focused on the positive experiences of working in an academic environment. The objective of this chapter is to give a general orientation for the thesis. This will include my personal reflections as a way of creating a context for the research, as well as some background to the study and what motivated it. The research questions and aim of the study will be described and the paradigmatic perspectives of the study - humanistic and positive psychology - will be highlighted, followed by an overview of the structure of the thesis.

Personal Reflection

In 2006, after five years of working in an academic environment, I met Prof Cameron[1] while we were collaborating on a field project. Prof Cameron is a female academic in her late-fifties. She was the project leader of an assessment process that we were conducting. In our interaction, Prof Cameron came across as energetic and engaging. My impression of her was that of a team player and someone who was concerned about the welfare of others; for example, she would ask each team member how they were doing in their developmental journey, how their families were doing, and their experiences of the work environment. This attitude and behaviour demonstrated an interest in the wellbeing of others. In addition, Prof

[1] This is a pseudonym.

Cameron displayed high levels of discipline. She set her mind to focus on and complete the work at hand by working hard and long hours. Prof Cameron was quite different to other people in the academic environment in which I had worked. My previous experience with senior academics was that they tended to focus only on the work at hand without considering other factors, both inside and outside of the work context.

Within the academic context, most of my academic colleagues seemed frustrated by the large amount of administrative work that they had to perform, the high student numbers that they were managing with difficulty, the marking of thousands of scripts, and so forth. Although Prof Cameron was also impacted by these negative aspects of working in academia, she nevertheless appeared to be a fulfilled happy person! All in all, Prof Cameron seemed to enjoy the academic world, although she had recently resigned from the university. She continued conducting research and community engagement work, published extensively, and many of her postgraduate students had completed their studies and obtained their degrees. As a result of my encounter with Prof Cameron, I embarked on a journey in which I sought to understand positive experiences of academia and of academics such as Prof Cameron who seem to thrive in this environment.

Research Background

In the view of Bergh (2011), work forms an integral part of our lives; it is an extension of who we are. The majority of people spend most of their time working, whether in an office setting or elsewhere. On this basis, it makes logical and existential sense that people make the most of this time. Work therefore forms a critical part of people's activities.

The term *work* has been described in many different ways and varies from context to context. Warr (2002b, p. 3) asserted that "the print out of its [work's] entry in the English

Oxford dictionary runs to nearly fifty pages… the meaning set out there includes what a person has to do, occupation, employment, business, function, task, and job". Bergh (2007) defined work as a conscious decision undertaken by people to satisfy their own and others' needs in a meaningful and worthwhile manner. A holistic description of work will be provided in Chapter 3, under the heading "Academic work".

It must be borne in mind that people do work for different reasons. There are situations where people find themselves taking up jobs for simple economic reasons or to satisfy basic human needs such as food and shelter. However, often the reasons that make people take up work are largely based on their value system. Values play a crucial role in understanding experiences in work contexts. In the view of Bergh (2007), the presence of certain values and the extent to which individuals can identify with their workplace influence their work experience. What this means practically is that, when people have a positive experience of their work, they are most likely to identify with their workplace. Invariably, this has a psychological impact on their health (Bergh, 2011). As a result, the facilitation of a healthy interaction between employees and their work context leads to positive wellbeing. In contrast, poor work experiences and the loss of work have been associated with many psychological ill effects for employees (Bergh, 2011).

Rothmann (2003) concurred with this view by stating that the impact of work can lead to both illness as well as to health. However, despite both the physical and psychological illnesses that often result from work, such as burnout, depression, sabotage, and lack of recognition, Hulin (2002) listed a number of benefits of work. These benefits include psychological benefits, economic benefits, social benefits, ethical benefits and political functions and meanings, such as the following:

- *Work is a source of identity*. When relationships are defined and formed, questions concerning work are often asked first, for example: What type of work do you do?
- *Work is a source of relationships outside the family*. The manner in which people relate to each other as colleagues or others in the workplace plays a role in defining their relationships and shaping their views of the world.
- *Work is a source of obligatory activity*. The obligatory nature of work means that it gives structure to everyday life. Other activities that people perform are influenced by this obligatory structure.
- *Work is a source of autonomy*. Work allows individuals an opportunity to be paid and the money that is received can be used to buy needed goods.
- *Work provides opportunities to develop skills and creativity*. Although people go to schools and higher learning institutions to learn different knowledge and skills, it is through their jobs that they develop and retain skills.
- *Work offers a sense of purpose in life.* Work offers a sense of purpose to most people. For example, for many women and some men, it contributes to the shift from family-oriented roles to a combination of work and career.
- *Work offers a source of feelings of self-worth and self-esteem.* People gain self-esteem when they accomplish something worthwhile and, for many individuals, work is seen as being worthwhile.
- *Work gives other activities, for example leisure time, meaning.* While not everything we do is measured against our work, work is considered as the general activity which provides a point of reference for defining and comparing other activities.

These benefits need not be viewed in isolation since the experience of work is very complex. There are other factors that contribute to the positive experience of this phenomenon.

Bergh (2007) listed the following positive experiences that people most wish to have in their work: interesting work, adequate help and equipment to do the work, sufficient information to be able to do the work, adequate authority to plan and execute work, adequate compensation, opportunities to develop certain skills, work security and seeing results in and out of work. These experiences will vary from one sector to another and according to different individuals.

Within the higher education sector, what is described as work differs from the type of work that is performed in corporate organisations or in the public sector such as government departments (M. Makhanya, 2012). Academic work consists of unique activities that are carried out simultaneously, such as teaching, research, administration and management. In the view of Pienaar and Bester (2009), higher education institutions depend on the intellectual abilities and commitment of academic staff. This implies that academics are regarded as significant stakeholders who contribute to the core business of higher institutions. Due to the high job demands that are placed on academics, they end up experiencing a substantial amount of ongoing occupational stress (Kinman, 2001) and burnout (Rothmann & Barkhuizen, 2008) which are linked to the internal and external aspects that influence academic work (Pienaar, 2009).

The internal and external aspects that influence academic work are discussed further in Chapter 3. As an introduction here, however, suffice it to say that, according to Pienaar and Bester (2009), some of the external aspects that currently influence the academic work role in South Africa include globalisation, increased application of advanced information technology in all aspects of higher education, and policy changes that are taking place in the university

sector. Policy changes alone contribute to the fact that academic work is one of the most stressful careers, and this simultaneously influences the work satisfaction of academics (Bezuidenhout & Cilliers, 2010; S. E. Coetzee & Rothmann, 2005; Mapesela & Hay, 2005). The internal realities include establishing and managing high quality teaching and learning experiences for students (Pienaar & Bester, 2009). These aspects characterise the academic work role in a negative manner and, amongst others, lead to high job demands and long working hours.

Problem Identification and Motivation for the Study

Contrary to the above highlighted negative experiences of working in academic contexts due to the constant changes, some employees thrive in these types of environments and appear to be enjoying their work (Schaufeli, Bakker, Hoogduin, Schaap, & Kladler, 2001). These positive experiences are in line with the view of Bergh (2011) that the focus is currently shifting from conventional work values such seeking high paying jobs to more employees seeking fulfilment and meaning in their work. The implication of this shift is that personal values are crucial in the process of understanding positive work experiences. This is so because what is considered a positive experience or value by one person might not be experienced as such by the next person. van Zyl, Deacon, & Rothmann, (2010) concurred with Bergh (2011) that personal meaning is crucial to the understanding of positive work experiences. In these authors' view, meaningful work is at the core of an individual's judgement about his or her work. An interesting question to be posed here would be whether one's work is worth doing, and if it is valuable to the person concerned. What is clear from the above is that meaningful work contributes to a general sense of wellbeing and provides meaning to life.

Landy and Conte (2007) expounded the view that the experience of work should be one of the primary focuses in the study of work behaviour and should thus be elevated to a level of significance equated to productivity. If this is so, constructs such as personal values and meanings which are considered as contributing to positive experiences should be considered and studied in an academic context. The negative experiences of working in academia are discussed thoroughly in Chapter 3, and are regarded as contributing partially to the holistic picture of the general work experiences of academics.

The overall research question in this study is: What are the qualitative positive experiences of working in academic institutions in an Open Distance Learning (ODL) context, and the individual characteristics and the enabling factors that make academics experience their work positively? From the positive psychology perspective, we will be able to understand why it is that some academics are able to thrive in an environment that is characterised by, amongst , a lot of administration work, high student numbers, low morale and relatively low wages.

There is currently increasing positive psychology research being conducted at higher learning institutions in South Africa. Most of this research focuses on constructs such as self-efficacy, work-engagement, happiness, sense of coherence, organisational commitment, wellbeing and so forth (Bezuidenhout & Cilliers, 2010; S. E. Coetzee & Rothmann, 2003; Field & Buitendach, 2011; Jackson, Rothmann, & van de Vijver, 2006; Rothmann & Jordaan, 2006; Viljoen & Rothmann, 2009). Out of these studies, only a few focus on the positive experiences of academics. In a study of job satisfaction of black female academics, Schulze (2005), for example, reported that Herzberg's theory on job satisfaction could be partially confirmed because she found that the participants' job satisfaction was related to many intrinsic aspects of their work such as enjoyment of teaching, contact with students, growth teaching generated in themselves and using their expertise to serve their communities.

However, in contrast to Herzberg's theory, their job satisfaction was further enhanced by job context features such as having their own private offices and working flexible hours. Schulze (2006) revealed that the interaction of personal attitudes and some job context factors were major determinants of the job satisfaction of the white male academics under investigation.

In a study of job demands, job resources and work engagement, Rothmann and Jordaan (2006) reported a two factor structure of work engagement consisting of vigour and dedication. Six reliable factors were extracted on the Job Demands Resources Scale (JDRS): organisational support, growth opportunities, social support, overload, advancement and job insecurity. Job resources (including organisational support and growth opportunities) predicted 26% of the variance in vigour and 38% of the variance in dedication. Job demands (overload) impacted the dedication of academics at low and moderate levels of organisational support. Furthermore, Barkhuizen and Rothmann (2006) found a statistically significant difference between the work engagement of academics with different job levels and qualifications.

The literature described above reveals that positive experiences of working in an ODL academic institution have been studied by focusing fairly narrowly on the job satisfaction of black females (Schulze, 2005), the experiences of white males (Schulze, 2006) and the work engagement of academic staff (Barkhuizen & Rothmann, 2006; Rothmann, 2003), thereby creating a fragmented approach. In addition, the focus seems to have been on gender and relationships between specific variables, rather than a more holistic approach. This study places emphasis on the integrated positive experiences of working in academia and takes into account the impact of personal characteristics and environmental factors. This will help fill the gap identified in this study. It will also address the need to build a theoretical model that

can explain and describe the influence of academic roles on integrated positive psychology constructs.

The lacks in the existing literature have meant that no measuring tools are available to identify positive experiences in academia. One significant aspect of the problem is that there are very few instances of new culturally relevant tests that can be applied to a unique South African context with diverse cultural and language groups (Foxcroft, 2004). Many psychological tests were developed prior to 1994 under the apartheid regime. These tests are considered irrelevant because they do not meet the current inclusion criteria of being culturally sensitive and representing the diverse languages of the South African population (Foxcroft, 2004). After the 1994 democratic elections, the Employment Equity Act No. 55 of 1998 (Republic of South Africa, 1998) was introduced and implemented with a mandate to promote the application of valid and reliable tests to all employees. This act was endorsed by the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA). Accordingly, under the HPCSA, one of the required criteria for the development of tests is that they must be representative of the South African population. In order to develop such tests, it seems clear that the inclusion of different human experiences within the South African context is imperative. This is because experiences take place within a particular cultural context and are expressed through language which is consistent with such culture (Mkhize & Ndimande-Hlongwa, 2014).

It is on this basis that the current study, which focuses on the understanding of positive experiences of working in academia, is important. The significance of understanding positive experiences of working in academia and having a measuring tool that can identify those experiences means that gaps in job demands and job resources can be identified and thereafter be lessened by enhancing the positive experiences of working in academia. This is crucial because tertiary education institutions are considered significant knowledge producers in the ongoing transformation of the country (S. E. Coetzee & Rothmann, 2003). It is

therefore critically important, and indeed necessary that tertiary education institutions explore and understand at an individual level the qualitative subjective positive experiences of working in academic institutions in an ODL context, as well as the individual characteristics and the enabling factors that make academics experience their work context as a positive one.

It is envisaged that this study will make contributions at different levels. At the theoretical level, it will provide a conceptual description of positive experiences of work and provide a conceptual framework for understanding the positive experiences of working in academia, the individual characteristics and the enabling factors that make academics experience their work positively. This will include the construction of a theoretical model to uncover the associated meanings of academic key performance areas (KPAs) and integrated positive psychology constructs. This research will contribute to positive psychology knowledge in general, and most specifically to knowledge on the subjective qualitative positive experiences of working in academia by identifying personal characteristics and factors that enhance those meanings associated with the positive experiences. The research will therefore complement what has already been researched, namely the positive experience constructs of working in academia. In the view of B. Martin (2011), research on academics is necessary because, often, academics are the ones conducting research about others. As a result, they could be regarded as a neglected group. Furthermore, a framework for a measuring instrument of positive experiences of working in academia should be developed based on the qualitative results. Consequently, future propositions will be identified and could be investigated deductively or inductively.

An understanding of positive experiences of working in academia requires thinking already at the problem phase about epistemological and research paradigm issues. In general, an individual's experience is regarded as complex because it is influenced by, amongst others, one's values and prejudices (Brink, Walt, & Rensburg, 2006). The *Oxford Advanced*

Learner's Dictionary (Sally, 2005, p. 513) defined experience as the knowledge and skill that one gained through doing something for a period of time, and also as the thing that happens to one that influences the way one thinks and behaves. Consistent with the views of Bergh (2011) and van Zyl et al. (2010), if one considers that work experiences include fulfilment and meaning, then it seems that experiences can be personalised, and therefore are not easily measured although they can be described. This leads directly to the research question asked below.

Research Questions

Omorogiuwa (2006) emphasised that a research question should be directly related to the problem of study and address relevant and critical issues of the study. One way this is achieved is by balancing the inclusion of research questions. This suggests that there be enough research questions that are relevant to ensure critical issues are not excluded. On the other hand, it is important not to expand the questions to the point that they include irrelevant issues and dilute the study. The issue arising in the context of this study is how to understand the subjective positive experiences of working in academia by taking into consideration the presence of certain personal characteristics that influence positive experiences of working in academia, and the availability of resources that contribute towards an environment conducive to working in academia. The main research question for this study is: What are the positive experiences of working in academic institutions in an ODL context, and the individual characteristics and the enabling factors that make academics experience their work positively? Omorogiuwa (2006) suggested posing questions at the theoretical and empirical levels to achieve the balance discussed above. I have taken the liberty of also adding a third type of question, which I label "pragmatic". From the overall research question, the following specific questions are therefore formulated to direct the study.

Empirical. At an empirical level the following will be asked:

- What are the positive subjective experiences of working in an ODL academic context?
- What general recommendations can be made from the results of this study which will lead to the development of a framework for a measuring instrument on positive experiences of working in academia?

Theoretical. At a theoretical level the following will be asked:

- What is the nature of academic work in general and specifically academic work in an ODL context?
- What is the theoretical relationship between the different constructs used to describe positive experiences of working in academia?

Pragmatic level. At a practical level the following will be asked:

- What does an integrated model of positive experiences of working in academia, the individual characteristics and enabling environmental factors that influence positive experiences of working in academia look like?

Aims of the Study

General aim. The primary aim of the study is to explore the positive experiences of academic employees working in an academic environment with specific reference to an ODL institution. These positive experiences will be explored by establishing a context in which academics can qualitatively share their personal positive experiences. This study is envisaged as serving as the foundation for future studies which aim to develop a measuring tool for understanding positive experiences of working in academia.

Paradigms Applicable to the Study

To contribute to the general understanding of positive experiences, a theoretical framework that focuses on people's positive experiences is required. The humanistic framework and positive psychology paradigm, which falls under the broad humanistic approach, will therefore be adopted in this study. These paradigms are deemed appropriate in this study because they help to elucidate the positive experiences of work and, more specifically, academic work which is the focus of this research. The empirical research is based on the interpretative paradigm.

Humanistic psychology. The first phase of humanistic psychology occurred between 1960 and 1980 and was driven by Maslow's agenda for a positive psychology (Resnick, Warmoth, & Serlin, 2001). The humanistic movement focused on inherent potential (Bugental, 1964) by acknowledging holistic human experience (Greening, 1985). Resnick et al. (2001) stated that, initially, this paradigm was developed to challenge the 20th century emphasis on the objective study of human beings. These authors argued that the understanding that human beings are subjective is at the centre of humanistic psychology, with a conscious being and rich inner experiences composed of more than thoughts. This paradigm emphasised the individual as a holistic phenomenon by capturing different human experiences, both negative and positive, such as happiness, sadness, love, tragedy and so forth.

From a humanistic perspective, meaning is derived from acknowledging interaction in different contexts. Humanism applies qualitative or descriptive methodology that enables it to take into consideration the different aspects of people's being such as their language, and their physical, psychological, social and historical surroundings. The acknowledgement of these different aspects assists in getting closer to understanding and describing the true reality of people.

The application of the humanistic psychology paradigm implies using some of its concepts such as self-actualisation (Maslow, 1967) and the concept of a *fully functioning person* (Rogers, 1963) to understand the positive experiences of working in academia. These experiences will be understood qualitatively by appreciating academics' lived experiences through the use of language and interaction between the researcher and the participants.

Humanistic psychology also includes the writings of Allport, Rogers, May and Jung, as well as existential and phenomenological psychologists (Bugental, 1964). The humanistic movement represented a transition away from psychopathology to normal and optimal human growth which is also the focus of positive psychology (Bar-On, 2010). The positive psychology paradigm, which is also influenced by humanistic psychology, is described below.

Positive psychology. Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) acknowledged that positive psychology is ancient and recognised early contributions such as Terman's (1939) studies on giftedness and marital happiness, Watson's (1928) writing on effective parenting and Jung's (1933) work concerning the search for and discovery of meaning in life. Strümpfer (2005) concurred with Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi and referred to early contributors to positive psychology as courageous foot soldiers and giants whom positive psychology stands or builds on.

In the view of Seligman (2002a), from a philosophical perspective, positive psychology was regarded as a move away from concentrating on the negative to focusing on the positive. This is done by acknowledging the negative but emphasising strength. It is within this context that authors such as Bar-On (2010), Linley and Joseph (2004) and Rich (2003) regarded positive psychology as falling within humanistic psychology. Lindley and Joseph (2004) referred to the relationship between humanistic psychology and positive psychology as contentious, but acknowledged that the general principles underlying positive psychology

(such as human potential, fulfilment, growth, optimal functioning) are not new and have been utilised under humanistic psychology as mentioned in section 1.7.1.

Linley and Joseph (2004) argued that positive psychology's solid epistemological perspective was based on humanistic and existential psychology because of its origin, which is theoretically rooted in many other 20th century psychologies and constructs. Seligman (2002a) described positive psychology as emphasising positive subjective experiences such as well-being, happiness, optimism and positive personal traits like love, interpersonal skills and wisdom, and positive collective structures such as nurturance, altruism and work ethic.

Contrary to the disease model, positive psychology adopted a strengths–based model and therefore emphasised that, if people are helped to improve aspects such as resilience, hope and optimism, they will be less susceptible to depression and will lead happier and more productive lives (Wright & Lopez, 2002).

Positive psychology allows for the study of wellbeing which further allows for the study of understanding positive experiences of working in academia by understanding in general the relationship between work and wellbeing.

Interpretive paradigm. The research stance embraced in this study is that of the interpretive paradigm. According to Terre Blanche and Kelly (1999), the interpretive paradigm involves taking people's subjective experiences as the essence of what is real for them (ontology), making sense of people's experiences by interacting with them and listening carefully to what knowledge they share with us (epistemology), and making use of qualitative research techniques to collect and analyse information (methodology). In the context of the current study, this paradigm therefore allows the researcher to discover and understand the positive experiences of working in academia by taking into account the context and meaning of the academics as research participants.

Research Design and Process

In this section, I provide a brief prospectus of the research design used. A more detailed account is presented in Chapter 4. Durrheim (2010) described research design as a strategic framework that serves as a link between the research questions and implementation of the research. In this study, a qualitative case study approach was used to understand the positive experiences of working in academia. The research participants were selected purposefully and in-depth face-to-face interviews were used to gather information. The data was analysed by combining the four stages of phenomenological data analysis (Giorgi, 1989), the five phases of interpretative data analysis (Terre Blanche, Durrheim, & Kelly, 2010) and the phases of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Exploratory research. Exploratory research focuses on issues that are new or have not been explored previously. Durrheim (2010) argued that exploratory studies employ an open, flexible and inductive approach to research because they look for new insights into phenomena. Babbie and Mouton (2010) contended that exploratory studies are mostly done to satisfy the researcher's curiosity and desire to open up new areas of enquiry.

Since the purpose of the current study is exploratory, a qualitative approach is used to answer the research question by adopting an interview survey that involves the use of verbal interaction to collect data (Omorogiuwa, 2006). Later in the study, a framework for the development of a measuring tool for the positive experiences of working in academia is established. Below are the highlights of the various steps of the process.

Phases in the research process/Research methodology. The study unfolded in three phases with different sub-steps as illustrated in Figure 1.

Phase 1: Literature review. The first part of the study was the literature review phase which focused on two topics: the positive experiences of work and understanding academic

work. In this study the literature review was carried out before data collection. This allowed the research questions to be guided by existing literature.

Step 1: The positive experiences of work

This step was used to identify a theoretical framework upon which an understanding of positive experiences of working in academia could be based. The positive experiences model by Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) was adopted, and constructs that are relevant to positive experiences of working in academia were discussed. As a result, a conceptual model of positive experiences of working in academia was constructed to illustrate how those concepts are applicable in this study.

Step 2: Understanding academic work

This step involved exploring themes surrounding the conceptualisation of academic work, higher education institutions and internal and external factors that support, challenge and necessitate the general understanding of this study as a part of research literature.

Phase 2: Empirical study. In phase two of the study, attention was given to empirical data collection and analysis.

Step 1: Selection of research participants

The process of selecting participants and the sample characteristics are discussed thoroughly in Chapter 4.

Step 2: Interviews as an instrument for collecting data

Interviews as an instrument of gathering information about positive experiences of working in academia in this research are elaborated on further in Chapter 4.

Step 3: Data analysis

The data analysis process is discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

Phase 3: Interpretation of results. The third phase entailed the following steps:

Step 1: Analysis of results

This step focused on the thematic analysis of results in Chapter 5.

Step 2: Integration of the research findings

The integration of thematic analysis and overall literature will be presented in Chapter 5.

Step 3: A proposed model for understanding positive experiences of working in academia

The relevant and non-relevant aspects for developing a measuring instrument of positive experiences of working in academia are discussed in Chapter 6. Thereafter, suggestions are highlighted.

Step 4: Conclusions, Limitations and Recommendations of the study

This step draws the conclusions of the results and their integration with theory, declaring the limitations of the study and making recommendations (Chapter 7).

The three phases of the research process are illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Research phases

Chapter Layout

This thesis consists of 7 chapters as listed in Figure 2:

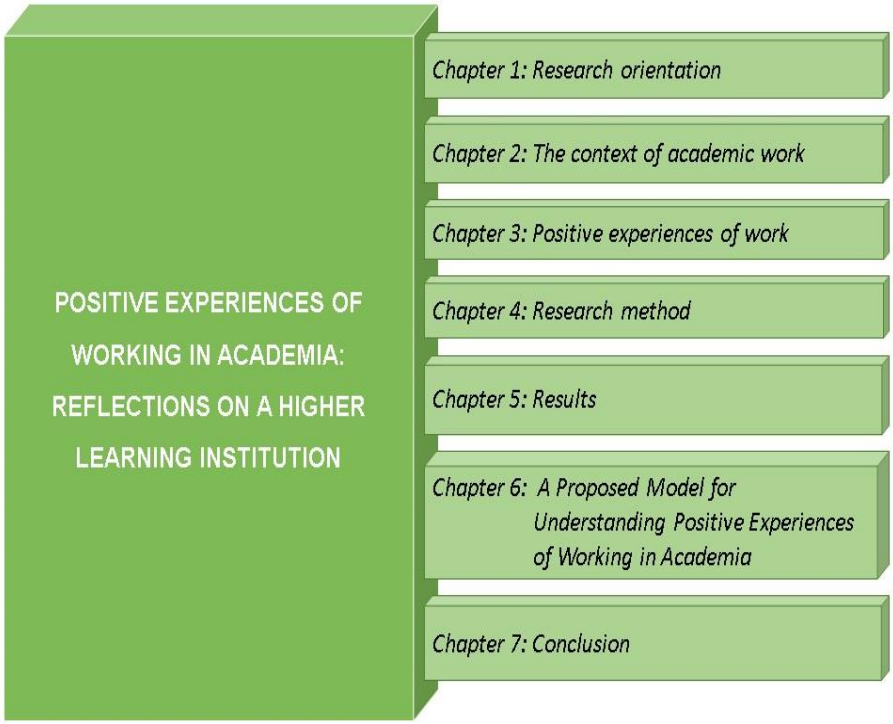

Figure 2. Chapter layout

Chapter 1: Research orientation

The objective of this chapter is to give a general orientation to the study. This is carried out by providing the background, the problem identification and motivation of the study. The research questions and aim of the study are also described. The humanistic, positive psychology and interpretive paradigm perspectives of the study are highlighted as a way of contextualising the research. A brief outline of the research design and process is provided.

Chapter 2: The context of academic work

In Chapter 2, the focus is on the description of academic work. This is achieved by dividing the chapter into two sections. The first section describes the concept of academic work by giving an overview of higher education institutions as a way of creating an understanding of the environment within which academic work is performed. The second

section concentrates on the external and internal trends that impact directly on academic work.

Chapter 3: Positive experiences of work

This chapter conceptualises positive experiences of work (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000) and thereafter positive experiences of working in academia by focusing on the constructs in the past and present (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). The motivation for choosing the different relevant constructs and their frameworks is provided.

Chapter 4: Research method

This chapter discusses the way in which the empirical research process was conducted. A qualitative method approach was adopted. The sampling type, information collecting and thematic analysis process and ethical considerations that pertain to this research are discussed in detail.

Chapter 5: Results

The focus of this chapter is on the presentation and discussion of the qualitative results as obtained from the face-to-face personal conversations or interviews with academic participants. A refined integrated model of positive experiences of working in academia is also presented.

Chapter 6: A proposed model for understanding positive experiences of working in academia

This chapter focuses on developing a model for how positive experiences of working in academia could be understood. The chapter is based on a meta-reflection on the theoretical approach adopted in this study, the literature reviewed, the empirical research and pragmatic considerations. In addition, a description and interrogation of a traditional "measuring tool", which was initially intended for in the beginning of the research process, will be presented.

Lastly, a deconstruction of understanding positive experiences of working in academia by applying *Lekgotla* as an indigenous South African model will be conducted by contextualising it within Healy's (2011) notion of *transformative dialogue* and Bujo's (1998) model of *palaver*.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

This chapter concentrates on the initial orientation of the study, and identifies contradictions at the epistemological, methodological, and practical levels and their implications. In conclusion, I will discuss decolonisation as a recommendation to be considered and applied in future research on positive experiences of working in academia. I will further share the practical implications of Lekgotla as an example of a decolonisation process that was adopted in the study.

The Context of Academic Work

This chapter is divided into two sections. The first section focuses on an understanding of academic work. The second section focuses on the external and internal trends that influence such work.

Understanding Academic Work

This section begins by defining work. Then a university as part of higher education institutions is defined, and its function and purpose are outlined as a way of providing a context within which the academic work is performed. The characteristics of universities are elaborated by focusing on relationship between universities and the state, and thereafter academic culture and academics as key stakeholders in universities are discussed.

Defining the concept of work. In Chapter 1, as part of the introduction and background to this research study, a description of work from a psychological perspective was provided. This was followed by a discussion of the general benefits of work. What was highlighted in those discussions is that work contributes both to our wellbeing and to our illnesses and, most importantly, to the way in which we generally refer to work as part of our self-identification. Ransome (1996) acknowledged the fact that work is a universal activity and, for that very reason, it becomes difficult to develop a universal or objective definition of work. The implication is that the meaning attached to the concept of work is different for different people in different contexts and cultures. In this sense, work can also be seen as an emotional or personal journey.

The *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (Crowther, 1995, p. 1375) defines work as:

> The use of physical strength or mental power in order to do or make something; a task that needs to be done, a thing or things produced as a result of work; what a person does as occupation especially in order to earn money; employment.

The implication of this definition is that someone is considered a worker because he/she is performing work activity by using his or her body and/or mental power to complete identified activities. Upon completion of the work activities, the worker receives compensation in the form of money. Most definitions of work from the Western perspective emphasise the monetary value of activities and leave out those activities that do not include payment (Ransome, 1996). The definition given above does not exclude non-monetary activities. The important element that is missing in the above description is the application of the emotions or feelings that are necessary to perform work. The above definition, therefore, is not holistic; it provides a mechanistic definition of work and leaves out other critical aspects required to carry out work by not taking into account the relational value between work and social influences and subjective experiences.

It is important to note that the concept of work is more than its mechanical and economic definitions. Context will always influence the different understandings of work at any particular time. At times, it might even be necessary to consider different aspects of what constitutes work. Related to the current study, for example, scholars have argued that the academic context is a unique workplace because it requires high levels of skill specialisation and qualifications for the majority of its positions, both in academia and in administration (Portnoi, 2003), and because the type of work in academia differs from the type of work that is performed in corporate organisations or in the public sector (M. Makhanya, 2012) as it includes teaching, research and administration and management tasks that are different from those performed by any other group of workers (Oshagbemi, 1996).

In order to fully conceptualise academic work, then, it is important to explore the nature of the context in which it takes place, by describing a university and the factors that influence it and therefore academic work.

Defining a university. Higher education institutions are, therefore, generally organisations within the field of higher education (Holley, 2009). Indeed, the South African Higher Education Act No. 101 of 1997 defined higher education institutions as institutions that offer higher education on a full-time, part-time and/or distance basis (Mabizela, 2002). This implies all organisations of post-matric education. It is within this understanding that a university which is the focus of this research is therefore regarded as an institution of higher learning.

Holley (2009) emphasises the undertakings of a university as concerned with teaching, research and service. Through teaching and research activities, individuals are enabled to qualify for degrees to eventually assume higher social and economic responsibilities in their societies than they would have occupied without such an education (Divala, 2009). This is congruent with Good's (2009) definition of a university as:

> An institution of higher education with the authority to grant academic degrees in various disciplines or fields of study. It usually consists of undergraduate and graduate divisions. Undergraduate studies lead to bachelor's degrees, while graduate studies lead to advanced degrees such as master's or doctoral degrees. (p. 530).

According to Gultig (2000), however, the core activities of a university are the production of knowledge, the dissemination and application of knowledge and the development of the capacity for higher level problem-solving and innovation. It is within this context that universities are regarded as complex systems. They consist of various structures

such as departments and units, each with their own cultures, and various elements such as function, management style and product (M. Fourie, 2000; Portnoi, 2003).

Brits (2011) described a university from a general systems perspective as a complex open organisation with subsystems. These subsystems are linked and interact, and include internal customers and suppliers. Such university subsystems comprise the library, academic support units, finance functions, administration and so forth. This definition brings to the forefront the relevant support structures found in universities, each with different roles to offer. At universities, top management is responsible for the university's vision, mission, objectives, strategies and institutional plans. Both top and senior management identify the aim of the institution, its goals and its key objectives at a strategic level. Brits (2011) further stated that the deputy vice-chancellors and executive deans are the main role players who develop tactical goals which set direction for the planning and resource allocation that takes place on an institution's operational level. Brits' (2011) definition is, however, somewhat limited because a university is more than its structure and personnel and, despite the rise of managerialism at universities, many universities still maintain aspects of a more collaborative and collegial ethos in how they perform their functions.

Soudien (2010) gives a more inclusive definition by reminding us to take into consideration the role of the global community in defining a university. This is done by identifying certain processes and rituals that measure and define excellence before a higher learning institution can be allowed to become a university. All these definitions contribute to the different elements of what constitute a university. To further understand the meaning of a university, the role of a university will be described in the next section.

The role of a university. Bender (2008) suggested that the core roles of a university are teaching and learning, research and community engagement. Bender argued that these roles

should not be viewed in isolation but as being dependent on each other. The implication is that research influences teaching and learning and community engagement, and vice versa.

Other studies have suggested that Bender's description is somewhat limited. Higgs (2002), for example, posited that political and economic factors influence how the roles of universities are understood, because universities adopt certain dominant political and economic ideologies that are practised at a specific point in time. This is borne out by the World Bank's Task Force on Higher Education and Society (2000) which indicated that the role of universities in the developing world differs from that of universities in developed countries. In developing countries, such as South Africa, universities are expected to contribute towards economic wellbeing. A relevant example of the role of a university being influenced by political and economic factors is the fact that, under the apartheid regime, universities were heavily influenced by the administration of the apartheid government (Subotzky, 2009). They were created as racially segregated public institutions (Portnoi, 2003), which implies that universities were used to promote and maintain the apartheid ideology.

In the view of Higgs (2002), public higher education institutions such as public universities play a national development role and they therefore should be understood in relation to the significant contributions and roles embodied in them. This is indicated in their ethos, issues of governance, accountability, autonomy and academic freedom, which cannot be separated from national development objectives. The institutional goals are reflected in organisational mission statements and in the cultural norms of individual institutions (Holley, 2009). The purpose of such mission statements is to communicate a promise of service delivery to the different stakeholders and the formal principles within which institutions are embedded and in which they function. Holley (2009) further added policies which are related to the goals that are used in institutions to guide stakeholders in their work as reflective of

institutional goals. Examples of such policies include degree requirements, course syllabi, and tenure and promotion criteria.

In South Africa, irrespective of whether they also have a political and social role in addition to their core functions, there seems to be consensus that the core functions of universities are teaching, learning, research and community engagement. In the view of Makhanya (2007) research is the unique priority which distinguishes a university from other similar institutions. In the next section an elaboration on the roles of universities will be provided by introducing the purposes of universities and indicating how they are related to each other.

Purpose of universities. The roles and purpose of universities are not always clearly distinguished. In addition to Higgs' (2002) view that political and economic factors influence the roles of universities, such roles are also linked to the purpose of such institutions. Accordingly, the three roles of teaching, research and community engagement fulfil the purpose of universities. The 1997 Dearing Report generally describes the purpose of universities in South Africa as being:

- to inspire and enable individuals to develop their capabilities to the highest potential throughout life, so that they grow intellectually, are well equipped for work, can contribute effectively to society and achieve personal fulfilment;
- to increase knowledge and understanding for their own sake and to foster their application to the benefit of the economy and society; and
- to serve the needs of an adaptable, sustainable, knowledge based economy at local, regional and national levels; and to play a major role in shaping a democratic, civilised, inclusive society.

In line with the Dearing report, Higgs (2002) acknowledged the social role that a university plays in terms of the society of which it is a part. He commented that, within the South African context, the main task of a university is seen as contributing to the founding and building of a democratic society in order to meet the needs of the state and the economy (Higgs, 2002). This implies empowering those who were discriminated against during the apartheid regime, such as blacks, Asians and Coloureds, women and people with disabilities. From this point of view, the role of universities in a democratic and non-racist society is politically and not educationally influenced (Higgs, 2010a). However, Higgs also argued that a university should not be defined only according to its social role of nation building. Instead, he suggested that one of the crucial roles of a university is to question and criticise constructively a society's institutions, policies and goals. Although the social and political role of universities is important, the intellectual role is also critical because one needs intellectuals to achieve economic success.

Since context is crucial in understanding the description and role of universities South African factors that influence the functioning of universities, will be discussed in the next section.

Painting the bigger picture: Understanding the historical factors that have shaped South African Universities

Inequalities of the apartheid system. During the apartheid years, the education system was characterised by complexity, discrimination and inefficiency (Gultig, 2000). According to Oancea, Engelbrecht and Hoffman (2009), in South Africa pre-2004, there were 21 universities and 15 technikons. This is the time during which the South African higher education system was characterised by historically white universities (HWUs) and historically black universities (HBUs) (Bunting, Sheppard, Cloete & Belding, 2010;

Subotzky, 2009). Subotzky (2009) lists the ten HBUs and classifies them as follows (see Figure 3):

1. The six historically African rural universities – North West which incorporates Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education, a white, Afrikaans institution, University of Fort Hare , University of the North (University of Limpopo), Transkei (Walter Sizulu University), Venda and Zululand
2. The two historically non-African urban universities – Durban Westville (University of kwa Zulu Natal) and Western Cape
3. The two special purpose universities: the Medical University of South Africa (then part of the University of Limpopo) and Vista University (now incorporated into the University of South Africa)

The HWUs consisted of:

1) The four English liberal universities – Cape Town, Natal (now the University of KwaZulu-Natal), Rhodes University and the University of the Witwatersrand
4. The six Afrikaans institutions – Free State, Port Elizabeth, Potchefstroom which became part of Northwest, Pretoria, Rand Afrikaans and Stellenbosch universities
5. The only distance education university – the University of South Africa

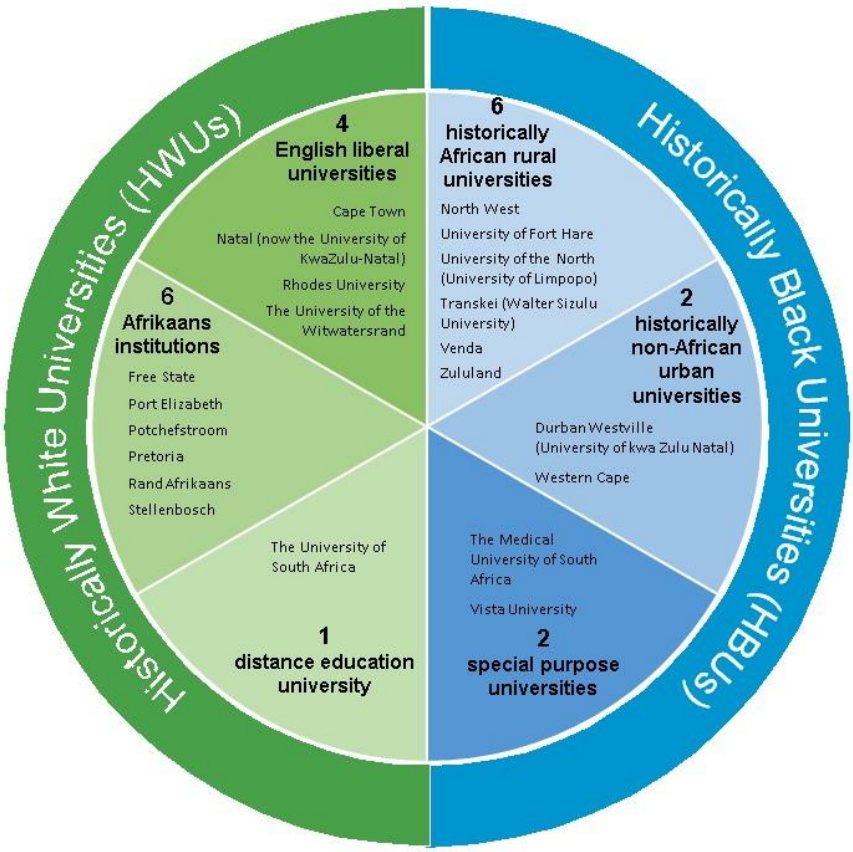

Figure 3. Historically White Universities (HWUs) and Historically Black Universities (HBUs)

At the time, the HBUs were largely undergraduate teaching institutions, offering a narrow range of mainly humanities and social science programmes. This was to prevent black people from entering careers in the natural sciences and the business sciences, as these careers were regarded as superior and therefore for white people only. Furthermore, unlike the HBUs, the HWUs enjoyed support from government (Subotzky, 2009).

The apartheid higher education policy was additionally characterised by the disintegration of academic education and vocational training which witnessed the division between universities and technikons. The division was in line with the promotion of race and class stratification of the social and occupational structures (Subotzky, 2009). This was intensified by positioning the historically white technikons (HWTs) in urban areas and the historically

black technikons (HBTs) in rural areas. Figure 3 demonstrates the HWTs and HBTs according to their urban and rural geographical contexts.

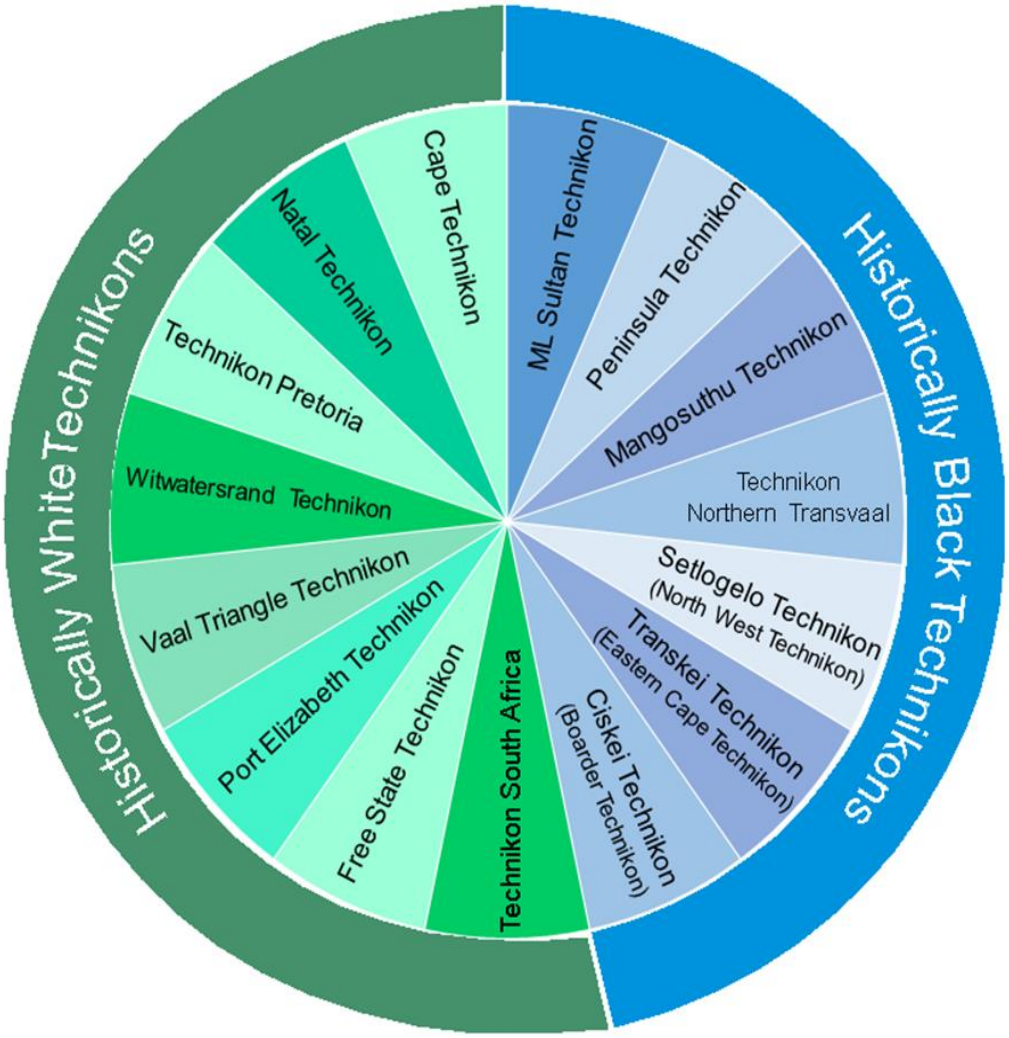

Figure 4. Historically White Technikons (HWTs) and Historically Black Technikons (HBTs)

The higher education merger. South Africa's first democratic election in 1994 brought a lot of change which also affected the general education sector. These changes in the education system have occurred in an attempt particularly to redress the injustices of the apartheid system. In 2002, the presiding Minister of Education, Professor Kader Asmal, announced plans to streamline the apartheid-created system through reducing the number of universities and technikons by merging institutions (Bunting et al. 2010 & Koen, 2003). The

rationale for the merger was to address financial, political, quality and racial disparities. This resulted in the 2004 higher education merger, which left the country with 23 universities.

The merging of institutions with diverse historical origins, research cultures and programme mixes was intended to dissolve much of the institutional legacy of apartheid in higher education. Another reason for the merging process was to end the binary division between technikon institutions and research institutions (Oancea et al., 2009). As a result, South Africa found itself with three types of public higher education institution: traditional universities, universities of technology and comprehensive universities (Oancea et al., 2009). Oancea et al. (2009) stated that the traditional universities had a strong research culture, while the universities of technology and comprehensive universities were regarded as having less established research cultures, but nevertheless having the potential to develop to the level of research institutions. On 1 January 2004, Technikon South Africa and the old University of South Africa (Unisa) merged into a single public higher education institution retaining the name Unisa.

The mergers of the new universities had both positive and negative effects on employees as indicated in section 1.3 and 1.4. In the view of Cartwright and Cooper (1993), one of the disappointing outcomes of numerous mergers and acquisitions can increasingly be linked to the neglect and mismanagement of the human aspect of the process which resulted in the stressful and dysfunctional impact these changes brought on the employees involved. Such experiences affect employees negatively because they challenge the employees to absorb the pressures and stresses in the organisation while attending to their own personal and home needs (Bekwa & Ngokha, 2004).

In order to fully understand the concept of new universities, it is helpful to explore in more detail some of their characteristics as discussed below.

Characteristics of universities. The World Bank's Task Force on Higher Education and Society (2000) regarded the higher education system which include different types of universities in developing countries as being characterised by three basic elements: (1) being public or private, (2) whether organisations are directly involved in their own financing, management and operations as private or public organisations, and (3) the formal and informal rules that guide the institutional and individual behaviour and interactions among the various actors. While the above are regarded by the Task Force on Higher Education and Society as characteristics, they could be regarded as distinctions between universities. The distinctions between universities are deemed important since they will assist in describing and understanding the context of the type of university that focus on this study.

Significantly, Divala and Waghid (2008) and Subotzky (2009) included the legacy of colonialism as another important characteristic of universities on the African continent. This is because, in the colonial context generally and in South Africa particularly, education was used as a tool to discriminate between the black and white races. The promotion of white dominance and control over the black race was practised. In this research, the focus is not directly on the colonial characteristic. However, it will be incorporated by providing relevant examples where it is deemed necessary.

The three distinctions of universities according to the Task Force on Higher Education and Society (2000) are elaborated on below.

The relationship between universities and the state. According to Higgs (2002), the co-relationship between universities and the state is something not to be taken for granted. This supportive role by government is significant in this research because it is assumed that it will contribute towards some of the environmental factors that are necessary for creating an environment that is conducive for academics to experience positive experiences of working in academia. The relationship is regarded as particularly complex because of the way public

universities are funded. Mwaniki (2010) maintained that most public universities in developing countries receive their funding from the state. As a result, they find themselves in a compromised role because of the high demands that are placed on them by the government without increasing the public funding (Wangenge-Ouma & Cloete, 2008).

The situation is no different in South Africa. According to Wangenge-Ouma and Cloete (2008), in South Africa, public universities receive an average of 50% of their total revenues from the state and that percentage is declining. The decline is exacerbated by the new funding framework that separates subsidies into "block" funds and "earmarked" funds, which are further subdivided into allocations identified as teaching inputs and outputs and research outputs (Oancea et al., 2009). This implies that the state provides funding to universities when they produce high research and postgraduate output.

The decline of state funding requires public universities to seek resources elsewhere in order to maintain their stability and to function in line with their mission (Wangenge-Ouma & Cloete, 2008). As a result, South African universities have used an increase in tuition fees to ensure both cost recovery and optimal revenue generation. Such an approach has resulted in the recent *#feesmustfall* student uprising throughout South Africa where students demanded free education. The increase in tuition differs from university to university. There is no uniform single model to guide institutional practices relating to the structure of tuition fees. Wangenge-Ouma and Cloete (2008) argued that, although all the revenues generated from the various sources contribute to reducing the dependence of universities on state funding, some of these revenues are inadequate and do not contribute to the financial health of these institutions.

According to Divala (2009), the nature of the state–university relationship strongly affects how the university conducts its core functions, where it does it, with whom and for how long. To this effect, universities which have a better relationship with government are

likely to get more assistance. This, however, implies that there is implicit government control over those universities which they fund. Divala (2009) further stated that governments in Africa determine the operations of higher education institutions with the view that they are the major agents for labour training and the improvement of socioeconomic conditions in a country. Jansen (2007) argued that the changes that accompany the implicit control of universities affect the academic freedom and institutional autonomy that has been practised in universities since their earliest conception. Divala (2009) concurred with Jansen's argument, stating that what the state thinks should be the functions of a university are not necessarily perceived to be so by all stakeholders within specific universities.

Being public or private. Private universities are different from public universities because the latter tend to be exposed to greater bureaucratic control and more state regulation than private institutions (Task Force on Higher Education and Society, 2000). In the view of Cedras (2014), public universities have a greater responsibility to be publically accountable. As a result, public universities are confronted with the challenge of serving the public interest and, simultaneously, fulfilling the core business of higher education. This is because public universities are under more pressure to live up to this responsibility as they are more funded by the state and therefore the public. According to Divala and Waghid (2008), however, it is the responsibility of both public and private institutions to protect the public interest. Private universities get government support like public universities. The difference between public higher education institutions and private higher education institutions is the proportions they receive in terms of their sources of income from student fees, subsidies from sponsoring organisations, loan systems and government support (Thaver, 2004). This therefore implies that the opportunities for institutional autonomy and academic freedom in private universities are greater than in public universities where governments subsidise the learning to a large extent.

Since public universities are responsible for serving the public interest, it could be argued that academic freedom could be built into accountability (Cedras, 2014). However, Jansen (2007) argued that academic freedom implies the absence of external interferences in pursuing academic concerns and activities. It refers to the kinds of immunity which academics as professionals need to enjoy in order to function effectively, and the right of the academic to study and publish without any hindrance, except where such acts infringe on the rights of others (Divala & Waghid, 2008). Academic freedom influences the way in which the courses that are allowed in an institution may be taught, the orientation/s to be adopted and the determination of content (Wolpe, Singh, & Reddy, 1995).

Institutional autonomy is another practice that is linked to academic freedom in both public and private institutions of higher learning. Institutional autonomy means that institutions have the right to decide for themselves their core academic concerns and to run their affairs with little interference from external influences (Bentley, Habib, & Morrow, 2006; Jansen, 2007). The two terms, *institutional autonomy* and *academic freedom*, seem to be co-dependent on each other. It would seem that if there is institutional autonomy, academic freedom will prevail, but if there is limited or no institutional autonomy, it will have a negative impact on academic freedom. Divala and Waghid (2008) warned researchers to use the term *autonomy* with caution because its meaning differs from one institution to another on the African continent. According to Cedras (2014), higher education institutions in South Africa find themselves in tense conflict between autonomy, public accountability and state intervention. These concepts, *institutional autonomy and academic freedom,* are regarded by Cedras (2014) as relevant in the functioning of universities as they have a potential to influence each other and therefore influence towards how academics experience their work.

Direct or indirect involvement in own financing, management and organisation.

Whether universities are public or private will influence the degree to which they are able to directly or indirectly become part of their financing, management and operations. The supportive role by government is important in this research because it is assumed that it will contribute towards some of the environmental factors that are necessary for creating an environment that is conducive for academics to experience positive experiences of working in academia. Altbach and Teferra (2003) indicated that higher education on the African continent is largely characterised by state involvement in the running of its systems. The relationship between universities and the state is sometimes complicated because universities and the academics they employ serve the state and the broader society simultaneously, making them both clients and stakeholders (Franzsen, 2003).

Divala and Waghid (2008) have stated that African countries such Egypt, Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya, Uganda, Malawi, Zimbabwe, Lesotho, Namibia and South Africa have public higher education systems that are governed by the state. In these countries, governments control the operations of the higher education institutions by allowing the higher education sector to become the main agent in labour training and in the improvement of socioeconomic conditions in their respective countries (Divala, 2009). The extent of the state's control varies from country to country. However, despite its emphasis on co-operative governance, the South African government is also regarded as handling issues relating to the higher education sector in a manner that is beyond an equal partnership and stakeholder-ship and amounts to government control (Divala, 2009). According to the Department of Higher Education and Training's (2013) white paper for post-school education and training, the role of higher education in South Africa is to serve a new social order, to meet pressing national needs, and to respond to new realities and opportunities. This form of control is viewed as the main source of erosion of institutional autonomy and academic freedom. Properly

construed, the government should play a supportive role with regard to higher education that will promote an environment conducive for teaching and learning in institutions of higher learning rather than dominating their functionality.

From the above funding scenario and state relationship discussion, it becomes apparent that universities as higher learning institutions are conceived and understood differently in terms of the different roles and purposes they have with regard to society at large. Due to underdevelopment and developing socioeconomic growth, the social role played by universities in Africa including South Africa is emphasised, as opposed to their academic role. In the view of Olukoshi and Zeleza (2004), the contexts and content of the challenges related to redefining universities differ between countries. The similarity between universities is that they all reflect the decomposition of the old social contract between the university, the state and society in which higher education was valued as a public and intellectual reservoir.

In South Africa, universities have played a crucial social role in correcting the inequalities of the apartheid system which created educational and economic inequalities, sometimes to the detriment of the academic role of universities which is to contribute towards knowledge generation through research, teaching and community engagement. In general, the relationship between state and universities is considered crucial in understanding what a university is and what its functions are. According to Cedras (2014), this, however, contradicts what universities think should be the function of universities. The discrepancy between the function of the university as viewed by the university and the function of the university as viewed by the state contributes towards the creation of a context in which there is a decline in academic freedom. Academic autonomy is regarded as an essential element of academic work and environment (Cedras, 2014).

Open Distance Learning (ODL), in South Africa. It is important that ODL, which is the context within which this study takes place, be understood. ODL is an umbrella term for any scheme of education or training that seeks to systematically remove barriers of learning that are concerned with space, place, time and age (UNESCO, 2002). This implies the type of learning that transcends geographical boundaries, thereby affording diverse demographic learners an opportunity to learn from home, work or any other place, at any time that is suitable and convenient to them.

In South Africa, according to the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) (as cited in Prinsloo, 2015, p. 24), ODL is described as: "All distance programs offered which are based on open learning principles". According to Prinsloo, the DHET further describes open learning principles as:

> ...an approach which combines the principles of learner centredness, lifelong learning, flexibility of learning provision, the removal of barriers to access learning, the recognition for credit of prior learning experience, the provision of learner support, the construction of learning programs in the expectation that leaners can succeed, and the maintenance of rigorous quality assurance over the design of learning materials and support systems (p. 24).

From the description above it becomes evident that the learner is at the heart of open learning principles. The focus on the learner includes, among other things, the recognition of the previous knowledge and experience she or he is bringing into the learning process, using different methods to deliver easy access to learning, and the provision of learner support, for example, by making use of tutors.

Distance learning, which is sometimes referred to as open learning, emphasises the fact that facilitators of learning and learners are separated by geographical distance (UNESCO,

2002). Simpson and Anderson (2012) described distance education/learning as evolving through a process of generations. During the first and second generation, learning and teaching was delivered by structured material and communication was dominated by the teacher. According to these authors, the first generation of distance education was characterised by print technology. The second generation focused on teaching and learning via technologies such as radio and television. During these generations, interaction between learners and teachers and between learners remained minimal. Nipper (1989) described the third generation as focused on asynchronous and synchronous computer conferencing (J. Taylor, 2001). Moore and Kearsley (2005) described the third generation as developing a systems approach. According to Taylor (2001), a fourth generation is linked to flexible learning based on online teaching, and a fifth generation exploits additional aspects of *intelligent* digital technologies.

The concept of openness differs from country to country because it is guided by national legislation. For example, in South Africa, openness requires students to have minimum admission requirements for enrolling in higher education of any kind, whether for a certificate, diploma or degree. Prinsloo (2015) pointed out that, while the DHET policy refers to all distance education offerings as ODL, different South African higher education institutions may determine their own unique admission requirements for their distance education programmes in addition to the minimum national admission requirements of a matriculation certificate. Unlike in South Africa, openness in the Open University of the United Kingdom means that students who enrol in that institution for their undergraduate studies do not need to prove their previous academic achievements.

In the view of Prinsloo (2015), traditional forms of higher education such as residential or face-to face education cannot address the need for or cope with increasing mass participation rates in higher education. Makoe (2015) indicated that ODL came as a response

to the growing population in most developing countries which struggle with expanding access to higher education due to, among other things, limited resources and therefore insufficient capacity to provide quality education. For many countries in Africa, distance education seems to be the only option to widen participation in higher education (Makoe, 2015).

In South Africa, distance education and ODL have been in existence since 1873 when the University of South Africa was established (Prinsloo, 2015). Distance education has thus always been part of the university sub system with 40% of headcount students and approximately 30 of Full-time equivalent (FTE) students (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2014). However, in the context of post-apartheid South Africa, ODL bridges the gap that has been created by the apartheid system by giving many black people access to higher education (Ngubane-Mokiwa & Letseka, 2015).

Up until the promulgation of the DHET's 2014 "Policy for the provision of distance education in South African universities", Unisa was the only dedicated, comprehensive distance education institution among South African universities (Prinsloo, 2015). That White Paper (as cited in Prinsloo, 2015) indicated that the policy for the provision of distance education in South African universities was widened to allow all higher education institutions to offer distance education programs. Unisa then had the majority share of distance education students of about 262 000 in 2008 which made up 33% of the total enrolment of 800 000 students in the public higher education system (Bunting et al., 2010). The other role players in distance education were Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (NMMU) and North West University. NMMU's distance education enrolments decreased sharply from 2000 to 2008 and this had a negative impact on African students. In 2008, however, North West University had 21 300 distance education students, mostly in teacher education. From 2000 to 2010, Unisa witnessed an increase of 10% in enrolments from African students (from 53% to 63%), with female enrolment increasing from 50% to 56% for the same period

(Bunting et.al, 2010). Prinsloo (2015) emphasised that the majority of distance education students are registered at Unisa. As a result, "Unisa is regarded as the only dedicated distance provider in South Africa, the only ODL comprehensive institution, the biggest on the African continent and one of the mega universities in the world" (p. 21).

Characteristics of ODL. According to Ngubane-Mokiwa and Letseka (2015), ODL has been characterised by the type of synchronous learning that is associated with distance or correspondence learning. It is also guided by educational theories that put emphasis on the teacher being the centre of knowledge. Different ODL institutions in South Africa and on the African continent, however, use a wide variety of modern and affordable technologies to facilitate the sharing of learning content with and among their geographically distant students (Ngubane-Mokiwa & Letseka, 2015). According to Mbatha (2014), ODL is currently characterised globally by the use of new Web 2.0 tools to allow for more interaction between the lecturer and the students, the student and the learning environment, the student and fellow students and the students and the institutions with which they affiliate. This approach is a move from the previous interaction approach where the lecturer was the main link or facilitator of students and their learning environment. In South Africa, ODL has been commended for transforming higher education from an elite system to a mass system (Olakulehin & Singh, 2013) but criticised for the low output of students (Council on Higher Education, 2013). Despite the low output, Sefotho (2015) argued that many formerly marginalised learners were able to shape their future despite the odds by having access to the labour market and commended Unisa as being very instrumental in this regard.

ODeL framework. Unlike ODL, Open Distance electronic Learning (ODeL) practice assumes that every student's learning can be optimally supported by modern electronic technologies and other digital facilities (Ngubane-Mokiwa & Letseka, 2015). It is on this assumption that ODeL students are expected to make optimal use of modern electronic

technologies to access their study material and to interact with their lecturers without necessarily being required to make physical contact. In addition, it is expected that ODeL will be guided by learner-centred educational theories. As a result of increasing technological advancements such as the internet, internet-linked computers, Wi-Fi, DVDS, video and video links, tablets, smartphones and associated satellite technologies, the generation and dissemination of knowledge has been impacted and the role of teacher as the centre of knowledge has been changed (Ngubane-Mokiwa & Letseka ,2015).

Challenges of ODeL. Ngubane-Mokiwa and Letseka (2015) argued that one of the problems in an ODeL approach has been the use of learning approaches that were initially meant for the correspondence model, for example, uploading pdf versions of old learning material into an online learning portal. Mashile and Matoane (2012) suggested that redesigning courses for the ODeL environment in such a way that all diverse students have accessibility to their different courses was a big challenge. Furthermore, due to the enduring historical inequalities of apartheid, digital illiteracy on the part of both students and lecturers has impacted negatively on the interaction of students and lecturers in the ODeL context (Letseka & Pitsoe, 2014). Ncube, Dube and Ngulube (2014), for example, reported that a proportion of Unisa lecturers resist ODeL because they do not like modern electronic technologies. This is because at Unisa, like other higher education institutions, the lecturers tend to be digital immigrants who are not socialised into learning through different tools but only through engagement with structured courseware.

Despite the challenges, Ngubane-Mokiwa and Letseka (2015) argued that ODeL can benefit a country such as South Africa which is characterised by repetitive service delivery and trade union protests by allowing students easy access their study environment and material wherever they are. In addition, in the ODeL model, lecturers are afforded the opportunity to provide ‘just-in-time’ learning facilitation and feedback (So & Swatman,

2006). This benefits students by ensuring that they receive feedback on time and have a chance to engage with their lecturers and peers, thus potentially improving understanding of the learning concepts (Ngubane-Mokiwa & Letseka ,2015). Tait (2000) argued that e-learning opens opportunities for e-student support where the student can have access to cognitive, affective and systemic support at a click of a button.

The above information describes Open Distance Learning, Distance Education, Openness and Open Distance electronic Learning. This description distinguishes ODL from face-to-face learning which occurs in residential universities. Furthermore, it highlights how ODL seems to be addressing the political and economic roles of universities (Higgs, 2002).

Understanding academic culture. The concept of institutional culture provides a good platform for understanding universities and academic work. The importance of understanding institutional or organisational culture is that it is deeply rooted in the organisational system. Organisational culture evolves over a long period of time. Culture determines the way the organisation conducts its business and, as a result, also influences research, administrative and academic processes (Sempane, Rieger, & Roodt, 2002, p. 24). In the view of Schein (1984), organisational culture is "the pattern of basic assumptions that a given group has invented, discovered or developed in learning to cope with its problems of external adaptation and internal integration" (p. 3). Trowler (1998) contended that conceptualising universities in terms of culture is not an easy process because universities have dynamic and multiple cultural configurations. Trowler argued that, when working with universities, it is necessary to first identify a specific culture which will influence the application of a particular model because that will affect the approaches one has to follow when implementing change. In this research, even though the aim is not to develop any intervention model, understanding academic culture from a specific perspective will assist in understanding the general interaction that takes place in universities as unique organisations.

According to Trowler (1998), there are two types of approach that can be used to describe organisational culture, the nomothetic and the multiple cultural configurations (MCC) perspective. The latter perspective has been adopted to describe the culture of an organisation in the context of this study. Adopting an MCC perspective to describe cultures in universities is more accurate than a nomothetic model because universities are complex systems (Trowler, 1998). From this perspective, acknowledging the complexity of universities implies that there is no single culture that dominates a specific university. The implication of MCC is relevant in the South African context, especially when considering the multicultural realities of this country. Different cultures co-exist in different units or departments of universities. As a result, during the research process, the level of analysis becomes the different organisational sub-units. This research took into account the different cultural dynamics of the departments that participated in this study and their implications thereafter.

Makhanya (2012) argued that a university is characterised by different stakeholders, who occupy different positions and therefore make diverse contributions according to their specific roles. Makhanya, however, emphasised the role that academics play as essential in universities. Academics are described as those individuals in universities whose roles include teaching and research as their core responsibilities (Williams, 2008). E. Martin (1999) concurred with Makhanya that academics are an important stakeholders because higher education institutions depend on the commitment and intellectual capital of their academic personnel and they are thus at the centre of the academy. It would be difficult to replace the knowledge, skills and experience of the expert academic personnel that universities have inherited over a long period of time (Simmons, 2002). For this reason, academics constitute an important stakeholder in higher academic institutions.

Although academic work is considered to be the core function of universities, authors such as Pienaar and Bester (2009) and Barkhuizen and Rothmann (2008) have reported that working in academia has been linked to high stress levels. In an academic context, stress has been associated with job dissatisfaction, increased smoking, alcohol and drug abuse, physical ill health and poor psychological wellbeing (Barkhuizen & Rothmann, 2008). In a national study conducted in Australian higher education institutions in 2002, 68% of academics indicated that they both wished and intended to leave the higher education sector (D. Anderson, Johnson, & Saha, 2002). In comparison, Koen (2003) reports that between 5% and 18% of South African academics were intending to leave higher education institutions.

The next section will focus on academic work, which is considered to be the core function of academics and universities.

Conceptualising academic work. Universities' strategic objectives are used as a general guideline or point of reference for describing the work of both academics and support staff. Given the complexity of universities, academic work in this thesis will be described from a social constructionist point of view because the description of academic roles is adapted according to each university. The social constructionist approach sees experience or knowledge as a socially constructed reality in a particular context (Becvar & Becvar, 2012). In each context, different realities, and the nature of academic work may be constructed. Each university constructs or aligns its reality according to its vision, mission, culture, value system and so on. For example, in the United Kingdom, the primary tasks of academics are regarded as teaching, research and administration and management (Oshagbemi, 2000). Oshagbemi (2000) acknowledged that, from another context, administration and management could be regarded as less important. This is due to the fact that research is considered to be the primary concern of academics, followed by teaching, and that the other two tasks are of secondary importance.

In the South African context, administration and management are not considered to be primary tasks, even though they are being decentralised to individual departments and lecturers (Mapesela, 2004). This further depletes already scarce resources, the researchers themselves. As a result, academics are increasingly expected to fulfil additional administrative duties without adequate available administrative support (Pienaar & Bester, 2009). Franzsen (2003) maintained that the specific key performance areas (KPAs) of academics in South Africa are identified and described around the tasks and functions associated with the following three main areas:

1) *Teaching and learning*. This is the main activity for academics and it emphasises all tuition-related practices in which academic staff is involved.
2) *Research*. This refers to the process of acquiring or developing new knowledge through theoretical and empirical studies in a subject field or teaching appropriate approaches and methodologies.
3) *Academic citizenship*. This is performed when an academic or subject specialist is involved in the community of the higher education institution and the wider community in delivering a service, performing tasks and making contributions to the functional wellbeing and upliftment of these communities through activities such as committee membership, reviewing and external examination.

The above key performance areas are included in the job descriptions of academic staff at South African tertiary educational institutions, usually in that order of importance and emphasis (De Beers, 2007). In the view of Franzen (2003), in most academic institutions, job descriptions are perceived by academics to be vague and lacking clarity in terms of job level distinctions. There are also differences in expectations and job requirements between different institutions and between different faculties in a single institution. However, Wolhuter, Higgs, Higgs, and Ntshoe (2010) reported that the results of their Changing

Academic Profession (CAP) survey indicated that South African academics demonstrated a balance between teaching and research in their roles.

Due to universities struggling to adapt to social, political and economic challenges, community engagement and, to a lesser extent, research are some of the core functions that have been neglected (Mwaniki, 2010). Recently, the academic landscape has changed, and research is becoming important due to the fact that research output is now used as a measure of organisational performance and for the allocation of subsidies in higher education institutions (Garnett & Pelser, 2007; Jinabhai, 2003). Consequently research has become the most important criterion used to influence academic promotion and status (Pienaar, 2009).

Schulze (2009) stated that, according to the South African Department of Education, academics are expected to publish at least 1.25 articles annually. These articles have to be published in journals that are accredited by the Department of Education as part of the funding framework. If institutions meet the required publication target, their subsidy from the government increases, and if they do not, their subsidy is cut (Schulze, 2009). As a result, the pressure on academics to increase research productivity (number of graduates as well as publications), without much regard for the quality and value of the work being done, has increased (Oancea et al., 2009).

In fact, it seems that the increasing pressure on academics, instead of increasing research output, has resulted in lower output. In research conducted by Barkhuizein and Rothmann (2008), academics from different institutions in South Africa indicated that they do not perform research and teaching as well as they would like to as a result of unmanageable workloads. Participants indicated that academics work longer hours than they choose to and often work over weekends. These two factors were considered to contribute to the high levels of occupational stress experienced by academics. As a result, South Africa has reported low research outputs and a low level of community involvement. Irrespective of

the pressure and challenges that academics face, the quality and quantity of research publications are used to monitor the performance of South Africa's national system of innovation (Jeenah & Pouris, 2008).

Unlike Makhanya (2007), Phakeng (2014) emphasised academic scholarship as a distinguishing core activity of universities. According to Phakeng (2014), academic scholarship is not about conducting basic research but about critical knowledge production. In the view of Makhanya (2007), it is only a small percentage of central, research-oriented universities that are "producers" in the international knowledge systems. Developing countries, such as South Africa, due to a lack of resources such as textbooks, libraries and laboratory facilities, are regarded as second or third-level contributors of knowledge. Continentally though, South Africa is regarded as a leading research producer in Africa followed by Egypt. The situation in South Africa is different because, after the 2004 university mergers, the comprehensive universities, which combined both universities and technikons, were expected to produce both basic and applied research. However, when compared to other countries internationally, South Africa is a minor player in the field of research and development.

With regard to teaching, Le Grange (2006) asserted that curriculum development is a neglected area in higher education discourses in general and, more specifically, in South Africa. Curriculum refers to the knowledge that is included or excluded in university learning or teaching courses (Le Grange, 2006).

Community engagement was introduced globally in the second half of the twentieth century as a third core role in universities (Wolhuter & Higgs, 2006). Community engagement takes place when one uses one's academic role in teaching or research to contribute to socioeconomic development of communities and it is not synonymous with charity work (Kruss, 2013). In South Africa, the Department of Education's White Paper 3:

A programme of the transformation of higher Education (1997) encourages universities to offer their expertise and infrastructure towards the cause of social responsibility. From a political perspective in South Africa, community activity is regarded as important in addressing the social inequalities caused by the apartheid system. However, not every academic is expected to go and engage with communities and, as a result, this role is not used as one of the criteria for academic promotion and so, as suggested above, there is a low level of community involvement in South Africa.

Community engagement, however, need not be seen as a separate activity. The core activities of academics, research, teaching and learning and community engagement occur in the communities that universities are part of (Bender, 2008). De Beers (2007) suggested that, with the emphasis on research tasks, the assumption is that, if research that is relevant to community work is conducted, it implies that community work will be addressed. Community engagement should not be viewed as a distraction from the other two areas but rather as an integration of the research and teaching responsibilities of universities (Mwaniki, 2010). According to Kruss (2013), moreover, engaging communities can happen either directly or indirectly through educational, social, economic or cultural involvement.

The benefits of engaging with communities, according to Mwaniki (2010), is that it can open up new research venues, provide new material for teaching, make what faculty do seem relevant and, not incidentally, make faculty feel good about what they do. On the other hand, the challenge with research in the context of engaged scholarship is that it is demanding, since it requires scholars to deal with real-life problems which require on the spot interventions which cannot be postponed or replaced. Furthermore, academic participation in communities is difficult because it involves many interpersonal tensions and cognitive strains that are associated with juxtaposing investigators with different views and approaches in relation to a single problem (Mwaniki, 2010).

E. Fourie and Terre Blanche (2018) are of the view that, although influenced by corporatism, community engagement brings change in the communities within which it is implemented especially if it is aligned in line with the knowledge ecologies and politics of the specific context. These authors further stated that, at Unisa:

> all academics are required, as part of their annual performance review, to prove that they have been active in community engagement, and all community engagement projects have to be formally registered with the university. These projects have to submit funding applications, quarterly and annual reports, and have to keep a /lose with on all monies spent (p. 5).

It is clear that academic work in universities includes teaching, research and community engagement. Academics also perform administrative work, although this is not defined as the core work of academics. In general, administrative demands seem to be taking a lot of academics time and contributing to unproductivity and a lot of occupational stress. Accordingly, the research task as the core activity of academics seems to be compromised.

In the next section, the trends that influence academic work (that is, teaching and learning, research and community engagement) in universities are explored.

External and Internal Trends that Influence Academic Work

This section focuses on the external and internal trends that influence academic work. The external and internal trends that impact on the higher learning context will be discussed at both the South African and the international level. The external trends to be discussed include globalisation, internationalisation, managerialism and new managerialism, academic capitalism and information and communication technology (ICT). The internal factors to be

discussed include South African government policies on equity, students and access, and finance.

External trends. Changing economic and social conditions have influenced the landscape of higher education all over the globe (Arokiasamy & Nagappan, 2012). The political and economic context of higher education has been transformed at different levels, including global, regional, national and local (Rhoades & Slaughter, 1997), and South Africa is no different (Jansen, 2003). These changes have affected the work role of academics in both a positive and negative manner. Slaughter and Leslie (1997) maintained that it is necessary to mention changes that have a high impact and those that have a low impact on universities. . Long-lasting changes such as globalisation and managerialism are usually considered to be products of worldwide structural adjustments and are therefore regarded as having high impact in universities. The short term changes are those variations that are regarded as easy to adjust to by their respective nations after a certain period of time. It is assumed in this research that exploring these changes will assist in understanding how they impact the academic work and the experiences of academics in both a positive and negative manner.

Both internal and external challenges are regarded as significant within higher education institutions. Institutions must respond to and accommodate such challenges. Some of the economic and social changes which affect the higher education context all over the world have more impactful consequences in developing countries than in first world countries (Sirat, 2010). The external trends that are identified as relevant to this research are discussed below.

Globalisation. In the view of Ntshoe (2002), there is no single definition of the term globalisation. Globalisation means different things in different contexts and it is on this basis that there are different conceptions and definitions of globalisation. Deem (2001) defined

globalisation as an expansion of services and businesses which follows specific economic, social and cultural norms that are deemed efficient in contributing to the world market. Ramose (2002a) similarly viewed globalisation as the purposive expansion of one's trade, religion, culture or politics beyond one's original geographic and cultural context. At the core of globalisation is the use of multinational companies and the internet. W. Naudé and Coetzee (2004) argued that globalisation is not sensitive to national boundaries and therefore does not take into consideration the right of nation-states to willingly participate. It favours the affairs of the world at the expense of nation-states. Ramose (2002a) argued, moreover, that globalisation aspires to promote *sameness* by implying that every single part of the world must be the same by practising and functioning according to a specific idea or system of ideas. However, globalisation affects each country differently, depending on the individual history, traditions, culture and priorities of the country (L. Louw & Mayer, 2008).

Waghid and Le Grange (2002) noted that globalisation has been mainly discussed from political, economic and cultural perspectives. They acknowledged that it is only recently that globalisation has received attention and is being discussed within the higher education context. Its implication in that context, according to Slaughter and Leslie (1997), "is to allow through political and economic processes to pressurize national higher education policy makers to adapt the way tertiary education is managing its business" (p. 13).

Sklair (2002) regarded university managers and academics as some of the professionals who have adopted the practices of global business by doing the following:

1) *Imitating business language* by referring to international students, retaining existing markets, creating new markets and so forth. These terms are regarded as global terms.

2) *Promoting globalised degrees* in line with the developments of technology to prepare students to deal with the realities of the new technological economy. This is often referred to as "world best practices (WBPs)".

Ntshoe (2004) further argued that, in South Africa, higher learning institutions produce useful knowledge for the global economic market without analysing the implications of this for the internal development and the basic needs of the immediate population as a whole. The problem with WBPs is that universities end up teaching students alien subjects that they cannot identify with because they are not relevant to their home countries and worldviews. Students are therefore exposed to westernised education as the only knowledge system or producer (Sklair, 2002). The reality of a multidisciplinary worldview is discarded. As a result of globalisation, university practices have been redefined from what they were before to keep up with global competition. Universities are forced to make hasty decisions without considering all the relevant university stakeholders such as the communities within which they are located. The implication for academics is that they must teach courses that fit into the globalised context but are most likely irrelevant for local consumption and applicability.

Moreover, globalisation tends to concentrate wealth, knowledge and power in those countries that already possess these elements (Altbach & Knight, 2007). In practice, globalisation contributes to the divide between those countries that already have developed economies and those that are still developing or underdeveloped. The other result of globalisation in South Africa is the issue of cutting funding to higher education institutions (Moja, 2004). This resulted from the fact that more demands were made on the public sector and therefore governments reduced higher education funding. This goes hand in hand with corporatisation and the managerialism models adopted in universities which perceive many necessities or resources as wastage and therefore unnecessary. This occurred even though higher education institutions were expected to grow and accommodate high student

enrolments. The implication is that higher education institutions had to find other means of seeking funding.

Internationalisation. Internationalisation in higher education is one of the strategies for dealing with the challenges of globalisation (L. Louw & Mayer, 2008). It comprises the policies and practices of academic systems, institutions and individuals in coping with the global academic environment (Altbach & Knight, 2007). B. Anderson and Maharasoa (2002) defined internationalisation as exporting higher education, the transfer of academic offerings, distance higher education and the formation of higher education networks. This is done by integrating international and/or inter-cultural ideas into the teaching, research, service and delivery of post-secondary education (Knight, 2006). Internationalisation also means access to virtual universities or virtual classrooms and discussing and planning for effective use of technology (Moses, 1997). Rouhani (2007) argued that the stakeholders of internationalisation include international agencies, national governments, higher education institutions, staff, students and the private sector.

According to Kishun (2007), there are different factors that drive internationalisation in universities, including commercial advantage, knowledge and language acquisition, enhancing the curriculum with international content and many others. Altbach and Knight (2007) emphasised monetary benefits as the motivation for all internationalisation projects in public universities that have financial difficulties. This is due to the fact that some universities are located in countries such as Australia and United Kingdom where governments have reduced public funding and encourage international ventures. Many countries recruit international students to earn profits by charging high fees, for example, countries such as Australia, Canada, United Kingdom and the United States (US) (Altbach & Knight, 2007). There are, however, certain public universities that enter the international market with the aim of enhancing research and knowledge and knowledge capacity so as to

increase cultural understanding (Knight, 2006). Developed countries such as the US export students and academic programmes to developing countries to further this purpose (Zeleza, 2005).

In South Africa, internationalisation can be traced back to 1994 when South Africa became a democratic state and joined the global community (Rouhani, 2007). Despite the benefits of internationalisation mentioned above, however, Kishun (2007) cautioned that South Africa, as a developing nation, may need to decide through its participation whether Africa in general will develop and benefit from the powerful forces of globalisation or be inhibited by conditionalities within society.

Rouhani (2007) contended that the development of internationalisation of South African higher education institutions took place in the following six phases as indicated in Figure 5:

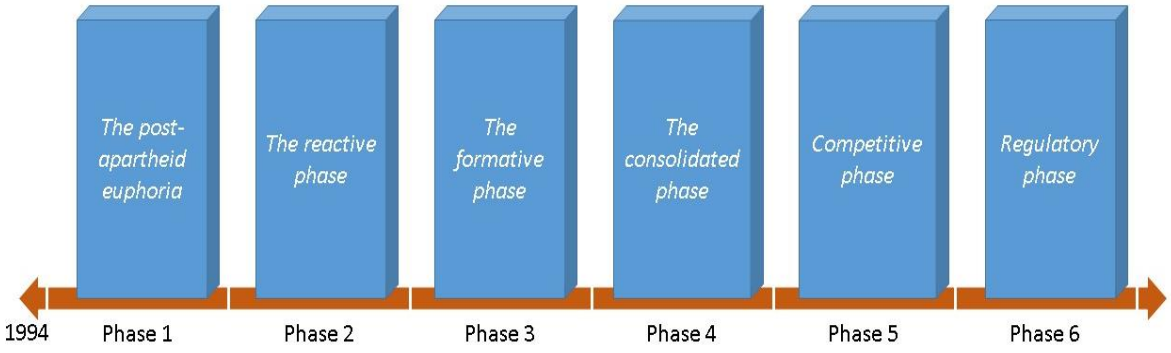

Figure 5. Development of internationalisation of South African higher education institutions.

These phases can be described as follows:

1) *The post-apartheid euphoria*. This was the initial phase that occurred immediately after 1994. During this period South Africa witnessed international students seeking access to its higher learning institutions. This occurred without institutions marketing themselves. As a result of the unexpected increase in

internal students, it became evident that South Africa was not ready to deal with such demands.

2) *The reactive phase*. During this phase, higher institutions went through national transformation, experiencing the simultaneous demands of both local and international students seeking access to institutions.

3) *The formative phase*. This phase was characterised by the awareness of some institutions that internationalisation was part of higher education. As a result, some institutions responded by providing services to international students through, for example, establishing international offices and recruiting and training human resources to administer and provide service to international students. Stellenbosch University, the University of Cape Town and the University of KwaZulu-Natal were some of the first to have international offices.

4) *The consolidated phase*: This phase witnessed some degree of stability in dealing with international students. This was because of the already established international offices in some institutions which also improved their administration in this regard. As a result, institutions started to compete for foreign students due to the realisation that foreign students' financial contribution was a potential income generator.

5) *Competitive phase*. The consolidated phase led to the fifth phase in which institutions were involved in aggressive marketing, as well as the recruitment of and competition for international students. Subsequently, receiving universities joined international organisations, such as the US-based Association of International Educators and the European Association for International Education, with a view to becoming more visible. There was also an increase in conference attendance in the United States and Europe.

6) *Regulatory phase*. Eventually government recognised the significance of having international students and internationalisation and was, therefore, in turn expected to contribute by setting minimum standards and conducting other regulatory activities.

In general, internationalisation in South Africa means that universities are considered to be globally competitive. According to Rouhani (2007) and Le Grange (2006), however, internationalisation has resulted in high student numbers which means increased workload for academics. One example is that of Stellenbosch University with over 2,000 international students who bring a source of solid income with them.

Managerialism and new managerialism. According to Adams (2006), managerialism implies the incorporation and application of approaches, systems and techniques commonly found in the private sector in the management and conduct of the public sector. Managerialism therefore emphasises an enhanced role for managers in academia. It was developed in Anglo-Saxon countries to contest wastage and the bureau-professionalism regime (Santiago & Carvalho, 2004). In the view of Adams (2006), managerialism therefore focuses on providing quality higher education at the lowest cost by improving the efficiency of institutions. Similarly, G. Anderson (2006) argued that managerialism may be regarded as a legitimate and necessary response to the massification of higher education. According to Ntshoe, Higgs, Higgs and Wolhuter (2008), under managerialism, most South African higher education institutions began to imitate business trends by prioritising efficiency and cost-saving measures. On the other hand, managerialism places increased demand on the time of academics, resulting in work intensification. Increased workload and work intensification are regarded as the most important factors contributing to academic dissatisfaction (G. Anderson, 2006). After managerialism was adopted, it became a practice that was required in public universities to ensure government contributed towards their funding. Wolhuter et al. (2010)

reported that South African academics were not satisfied with the practice of managerialism due to its perceived negative impact. Some of their dissatisfactions were related to lack of administration support around issues of academic freedom, teaching and research activities.

Deem (1998) differentiated *new managerialism* from managerialism as a way of trying to categorise the managerial techniques that are usually associated with medium and large profit-making business being imposed onto the public sectors by applying the use of internal cost centres, the fostering of competition between employees, the marketisation of public sector services and the monitoring of efficiency and effectiveness through the measurement of outcomes and individual staff performance. New managerialism in higher learning institutions impacted and changed the type of work done by academics (Deem, 2001).

Subsequent to the adoption of managerialism, there was a view that government had grown too big, too expensive and too inhibiting of individual enterprise, and therefore the introduction of new management processes was proposed. In the view of Santiago and Carvalho (2004), the aims of new managerialism were to: (1) improve management skills to assist in addressing the economic difficulties; (2) to work harder or more efficiently within the available structural and budgetary constraints to solve problems quickly and efficiently; and (3) to apply determined and visionary leadership that can achieve fundamental changes that in turn will give a new sense of purpose and advancement. The argument was that a change to leadership that adopts a visionary approach would enable institutions to reach their targets or goals by streamlining the administrative tasks that were compromising the time academics could spend on improving the quality of the core activities of teaching and research.

In a research study conducted by Ntshoe et al. (2008), one of the participants stated that "as part of cost saving and efficiency institutions have cut down the number of programmes, collapsed divisions between originally distinct faculties and created colleges, and merged

schools and departments to reduce duplication in a newly merged institution" (p. 400). Another participant in Ntshoe et al.'s (2008) study expressed his critique of new managerialism by stating that "programmes in the social sciences and humanities are generally the ones that suffer when the spirit of business and the market continue to drive policies which underpin programme qualifications mixes" (p. 400). According to Ntshoe et al. (2008), many of the participants claimed that the new managerialism discourse has impacted significantly on the traditional core functions of universities in general, and that the role of academics in particular had become more diversified and demanding because they were no longer limited to teaching and research as core academic deliverables.

Academic capitalism

Academic capitalism goes hand-in-hand with managerialism. Academic capitalism refers to the changes in organisational and management practices (Deem, 2001) such that some institutions in the academy are taking on the characteristics and activities of profit-making organisations (Rhoades & Slaughter, 1997). As a result, universities have increasingly moved to applied and entrepreneurial science in order to generate revenues, establishing research parks and technology transfer offices. In the past ten to fifteen years, universities have witnessed the introduction of activities that were not practised previously, such as fundraising and establishing development offices and foundations (Rhoades & Slaughter, 1997).

Academic capitalism reflects the reality of many public research universities by drawing attention to the way human resources are used in an increasingly competitive world (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997). According to Ntshoe et al. (2008), the impact of academic capitalism on the academic staff of publicly funded universities is that they operate in an increasingly competitive environment, deploying their academic capital, which may comprise teaching, research, consultancy skills or other applications of forms of academic knowledge.

This implies that academics have to seek sponsorships or donations to complete some of their academic work, for example, to carry out research projects. To achieve competitive advantage, academic capitalism requires and depends on information technology and communication (ICT) which is discussed below.

Information technology and communication (ICT). The incorporation of information technologies into the knowledge activities of teaching, research and publication has been influenced by globalisation (Zeleza, 2005). Since the 1990s, the world has witnessed an increase in the use of ICT in higher education (Stensaker, Maassen, Borgan, Oftebro, & Karseth, 2007). The roles of ICT in education include improving teaching practices, preparing graduates for the information society, enhancing high pass rates and refining the value of teaching and learning (Jaffer, Ng'ambi, & Czerniewicz, 2007). Communication tools such as the internet are used to globalise information and this allows access to a range of information (Currie, 2003). The impact of ICT therefore becomes inevitable in higher institutions of learning because it is adopted to facilitate one of the roles of higher education, the production and dissemination of knowledge (Waghid & Le Grange, 2002).

In the view of Siemens and Tittenberger (2009), technologies such as e-learning, mobile devices and learning networks are exposing universities to major technological developments. Some of the developments brought by ICT include the internationalisation and commercialisation of higher education, and the growth in part-time studies as well as interactive and distance-learning schemes (Stensaker et al., 2007). As a result of this diversifying of the higher learning context, universities that take into consideration the importance of online learning are able to respond creatively and efficiently to the pressures of developing change (Siemens & Tittenberger, 2009). According to Good (2009), new and emerging technologies offer lecturers great opportunities to be more innovative in their teaching and learning practices.

The increased demand for online education by education institutions is used to increase access to students in remote areas in order to democratise and to reach "niche" markets opened up by the new technologies and to enhance teaching effectiveness in university education (Mashile & Pretorius, 2003; Zeleza, 2005). The South African government has emphasised and encouraged the use of ICT for teaching and learning (Jaffer et al., 2007). Wolhuter et al. (2010) found, however, that, in general, South African academics do not make much use of ICT to support learning. While the majority of the participants in their study indicated that they make use of electronic communication such as e-mails to communicate with students, only a minority include computer-assisted learning.

Within a distance learning environment, Mashile and Pretorius (2003) recommended online education as an appropriate mechanism because of its ability to bridge the gap between learners and lecturers. In distance education, online teaching also helps lecturers to organise instruction and to create learning materials (Carr-Chellman & Duchastel, 2000). This is because, in an online environment, teaching material has to be well structured and clearly expressed to cater for the physical absence of the lecturer. In addition, this allows for collaborative activities among learners and, because of technology's flexibility, it makes it possible to perform certain activities through the use of synchronous and asynchronous communication (Broere, Geyser, & Kruger, 2002) which were difficult to execute whilst using the other delivery systems of distance education (Mashile & Pretorius, 2003). Asynchronous implies communication in which the students and lecturer engage in conversation that is not simultaneous (e.g., through emails or forums). Synchronous is communication that allows learners involved to engage in a simultaneous online conversation (Brown & Byrne, 1999).

Despite the benefits, the use of technology in teaching can dehumanise learning, minimise direct contact between lecturer and students, require significant technological skills

and overload students with information (Light, Calkins, & Cox, 2001). Furthermore, critics of ICT are concerned about the creation of a wide gap between those countries that can and those that cannot purchase and maintain ICT equipment and the sophisticated infrastructure required to provide globalised education (Edwards & Usher, 2000). Carr-Chellman and Duchastel (2000) viewed South Africa as one such country which does not yet have sufficient infrastructure to sustain online education. The problem also exists within countries. Mashile and Pretorius (2003), for example, noted that low socioeconomic status is linked to individuals without access to ICT. These authors highlighted the fact that access problems are not directly linked to access to ICT, but rather the fact that people come from poverty-stricken backgrounds, which are characterised by unemployment and geographic isolation.

Good (2009) cautioned that universities must be aware of the fact that many lecturers remain reluctant to use technology in their teaching because of a real or perceived lack of time to learn, lack of institutional support and training, lack of incentives, a general distrust of technology, or because they are satisfied with learning as it is. Mouyabi (2011) argued similarly that one major challenge of e-learning is lecturers who may be unprepared to implement activities for learners owing to a lack of skills with technology. Furthermore, Sesemane (2007) argued that, within the South African higher education context, the main challenge seems to be the preparedness of institutions of higher learning to deal with the dynamism of aligning their e-policies with government's e-policy requirements. Lecturers must learn to weigh up the positive and negative effects of incorporating technology into their teaching, and consider how the use of technology encourages students to construct their own learning (Good, 2009).

Johnson (2002) recommended that the use of the internet in education and training should provide content that is relevant to the students so that it will be appreciated; otherwise they will stop using it or will use it as a pastime only. Technology issues such as slow or

unreliable internet connection, and the fact that some courses can be difficult to present online therefore resulting in unenthusiastic students falling behind, can result in problems with implementing ICT.

Internal factors: The impact of South African government policies on academia and their implications for teaching. After 1994, the South African government institutionalised many changes through the implementation of legislation and policy documents (G. Louw & Verwey, 1999). Unlike in the apartheid years, in the new dispensation government believed it had the right and responsibility to intervene in the higher education system to ensure issues such as equity and access were dealt with, and to redress the discrepancies caused by the apartheid government (Jansen, 2007). The transformation of the higher education sector in South Africa began with the establishment of the National Commission on Higher Education (NCHE) report of 1996 (Gultig, 2000; Waghid, 2003). The role of the NCHE was to broadly investigate a new policy framework for the transformation of higher education, with the exception of curriculum issues (Subotzky, 2009). The NCHE report was followed by the establishment of a newer higher education branch within the national Department of Education (Subotzky, 2009).

In April 1996, the NCHE produced a discussion document titled *Vision for higher education* which identified the principles, goals and features of the transformation of education (Subotzky, 2009). Some of the fundamental principles, which were aimed at guiding and directing the process of transformation in higher education, were equity and redress, diversity, quality, effectiveness and efficiency, academic freedom and institutional autonomy and public accountability (Mapesela & Hay, 2005). This report was followed by the Department of Education's Green Paper on higher education and, subsequently, three drafts of the white paper entitled *A program for the transformation of higher education*. According to Mapesela and Hay (2005), some areas identified in the white paper included the

improvement of the quality of teaching and learning, securing and advancing high-level research capacity, capacity-building and human resource development, establishing a free and open academic climate and building institutional environments that are based on tolerance and respect.

The white paper's main focus was on addressing the economic needs of the country by emphasising that higher education should provide graduates who will be able to fit into a competitive knowledge society, bringing with them the relevant skills and competencies which would contribute to the growth of the economy (R. Fourie, 2004; Le Grange, 2004). It also focused on the integration of the education and training systems, which implies the creation of a system consisting of complementary areas of academia, applied theory and practice as well as knowledge and skills (Gultig, 2000). R. Fourie (2004), however, pointed out that the dual aim of the white paper was criticised because it was viewed as contradictory; that is, it focused on both reconstruction and globalisation when globalisation was perceived to be threatening reconstruction and the attempts to address the inequalities of the past. On the other hand, there was a belief that globalisation would bring benefits for the previously disadvantaged.

With regard to the development of policies within the higher education context, the white paper was accompanied by a draft Higher Education Bill, which was enacted in 1998 (Subotzky, 2009). The Council on Higher Education's report, *Towards a higher education landscape: Meeting the equity, quality and social development imperatives of South Africa in the 21st century,* was introduced in 2000. This was followed by the *National Plan on Higher Education (NPHE)* in 2001 (Waghid, 2003). According to Wangenge-Ouma and Cloete (2008), the important policy goals of the NPHE are: 1) producing the graduates needed for social and economic development in South Africa; 2) achieving equity in the South African higher education system; 3) achieving diversity in the South African higher education system;

4) sustaining and promoting research; and 5) restructuring the institutional landscape of the higher education system.

The following were the negative results of the NPHE as pointed out by Jansen (2007, p. 219):

1) The state now decides what can be taught, or rather, what institutions might be willing to teach without subsidised income, through skilful manipulation of the funding formula. This was done by creating bureaucratic structures, such as the South African Qualifications Authority, the Council on Higher Education and the Department of Education, to ensure that institutions act in accordance with such authority.
2) The state decides which institutions would offer what programmes. In some institutions certain faculties were closed and universities were therefore not funded for those services rendered.
3) The state eventually decided who could be taught, or rather, how many students were allowed to enter universities and in which specific fields.
4) Furthermore, the state decided which programmes would be funded at what levels but in ways that appear increasingly arbitrary, such as the differential funding decision on what kinds of programmes are more desirable than others.
5) The state decides on the credibility of qualifications, programmes and even institutions through the mechanism of higher education quality audits. It is claimed that audits are mechanisms for institutional development, but this intervention could close down institutions or programmes and make harsh and final public judgements about such activities.
6) The state now decides which institutions will exists and in what combinations.

7) The state now contemplates the centralising of information required for student admissions in a proposed central application office.
8) The state can now displace a Vice-Chancellor on the basis of review and install its own administrator to run the institution.

The outcome is that the state now has much more control over higher education, which can be helpful for issues such as opening up access but also introduces severe risks of putting academics under pressure. This is despite the evidence that, due to the high job demands that are placed on academics, they end up experiencing a substantial amount of ongoing occupational stress (Kinman, 2001) and burnout (Rothmann & Barkhuizen, 2008) which are linked to the internal and external aspects that influence academic work (Pienaar, 2009).

Policy changes alone contribute to the fact that academic work is one of the most stressful careers and this influences the work satisfaction of academics (Bezuidenhout & Cilliers, 2010; S. E. Coetzee & Rothmann, 2005; Mapesela & Hay, 2005). Some of the internal realities include establishing and managing high quality teaching and learning experiences for students (Pienaar, 2009). These aspects characterise the academic work role in a negative manner and, amongst others, lead to high job demands and long working hours.

The following policies, which focus on quality assurance, student access and success and equity plans, have been identified as having a direct impact on the work role of academics.

Policies on quality assurance. The issue of quality assurance is not unique to South Africa. Many higher education institutions in different parts of the world are taking quality-related issues seriously (M. Fourie, 2000). This is in line with the old academic tradition according to which quality and standards were upheld through the use of external examiners and peer reviews. According to Waghid (2000), important mechanisms in the formation of

higher education transformation were established in South Africa which included a National Qualifications Framework (NQF), a South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA), a Council on Higher Education (CHE) and a quality assurance (QA) system (p. 106). The formation of these bodies suggested that the South African government prioritises the achievement of quality in the transforming of higher education.

The NCHE played a major role in the development of the South African quality assurance system (Van der Westhuizen, 2000). To coordinate quality assurance in higher education, the NCHE made provision for the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) as an umbrella, independent, statutory body. The prescribed functions of the HEQC include programme accreditation, institutional auditing and quality promotion (Van der Westhuizen, 2000). According to M. Fourie (2000), the development and implementation of quality assurance and managed systems was influenced by the following:

- *Massification of higher education* – as a result of the changing demographics of the student population from the elite to a diverse student body.
- *Financial stringency* – government was faced with a cut in higher education. As in other developing countries, there were other priorities such as health, and primary and/or secondary education that also needed attention.
- *Internationalisation* – consequent on international students, quality issues, standards and benchmarking of qualifications quality assurance became necessary as a way of controlling the higher education received by students.
- *The knowledge society* – higher education institutions were considered an important stakeholder in the developing economies of their countries and therefore issues of quality become critical.

As a result, the General and Further Education and Training Quality Assurance Act No. 58 of 2001 provided guidelines for quality assurance but left the higher education institutions to develop their own quality assurance measures (M. Fourie, 2000). According to Singh (2000), quality assurance asks the following fundamental questions as part of the work activities:

- What am I trying to do or achieve?
- Why am I doing it in this way?
- What is the context in which I am doing it in that way?
- How do I know that it is effective and that I am doing a good job
- Is this the best possible way of doing it?
- Was it worth it after all?

For academics, these questions become part of a reflective process in both trying to meet the needs of their students and in developing the best content materials. Naidoo and Cooke (2001) indicated that, even though SAQA accredits and recognises formal programmes, short courses and the institutional providers of such programmes, it does not recognise or accredit the academics who provide these programmes nor does it offer them development and training programmes. SAQA was intended to be an enabling strategy body, but it was experienced as lacking clarity relating to its expectations and as being disempowering; as a result, institutions did not welcome it (Naidoo & Cooke, 2001).

In 2007, another policy, the Higher Education Qualification Framework (HEQF) was introduced to regulate all higher education qualifications and programmes or curricula in South Africa (van Koller, 2010). It proposed a radical shift from the way in which qualifications were designed in the past. The HEQF required all institutions to revisit and

redesign all their qualifications and programmes irrespective of the existing workload that academics might face.

According to Mapesela and Hay (2005), quality assurance policies pressurised academics to revisit their teaching methods and programmes, as well as to increase and improve their research output amounts frequently. This is irrespective of the fact that quality is regarded as a concept which is controversial in terms of what it is, and how it must be managed in a transforming higher education system. According to Henkel (1997), many academics were already frustrated about the type and level of administration they were required to do, especially the paperwork linked to the new quality assurance system. In research conducted by Ntshoe et al. (2008), all participants complained about the time spent on responding to the quality assurance and quality audit issues that are becoming an integral part of higher education practice and policy in South Africa.

Policies on equity. The Employment Equity Act No. 55 of 1998 also affected the working role of academics. Mapesela and Hay (2005) emphasised that this Act was implemented generally to address discriminatory laws and practices, such as disparities in employment, occupation and income within the labour market, since the disparities had created pronounced disadvantages for certain categories of people. Portnoi (2003) asserted that the Act introduced new academic workforce characteristics and new interaction dynamics; it emphasised that previously disadvantaged groups, such as blacks, people with disability and females, should be the first to be targeted for employment. The challenge was that, since universities are known for employing people with highly specialised skills which they acquire over a certain period of time, the trend was that experienced academics were replaced by young mostly black academics most of whom were recruited as postgraduate students. The implications of this were, amongst others, that such candidates lacked the experience of being academics.

The other challenge related to employment equity is that, as a result of South Africa's apartheid history, most black people were disadvantaged in terms of formal qualifications and skills, unlike their white colleagues who were empowered in those aspects (Portnoi, 2003). This meant that many such academics were not trained properly and also did not have doctorates. In addition, Habib (as cited in Webster, 2011) pointed out that the majority of black students come from working class families where they are pressurised to find jobs immediately after completing their undergraduate level to either feed themselves or assume roles as breadwinners.

Mapesela and Hay (2005) hypothesised that the impact of this Act would be experienced differently by old and new academics. Academics from disadvantaged backgrounds would be excited by the Act and might perceive the advancement of equity and the recruitment of blacks as making provision for colleagues or counterparts who could share a common understanding with them. Another group, the visionary traditional academics, might perceive diversity as necessary and beneficial to higher education, and thus would be happy about the Act. In contrast to these two groups, the conservative traditional academic staff might receive this Act with scepticism and hostility.

In a research study by Pienaar and Bester (2009) to determine the career dilemmas of academic staff during the career stage within a changing South African higher education institution, the following disparities were uncovered which indicate how academics related to the Employment Equity Act:

- Discrimination as a greater career dilemma for black academics than for their counterparts. The problems reported were issues such as promotion, access to research infrastructure, stereotyping on the basis of race, fair treatment and language issues.

- Lack of support was a concern for 40% of the black male academics.
- Role overload and role conflict were expressed as a concern by white females who indicated that they did not have enough time to devote to their own studies or research because they were over-involved in lecturing and marking.
- Remuneration packages were experienced as not being market related.

Access related policies. In the past decade, South African universities have seen a rise in student enrolments. The numbers have risen from 500 000 to 750 000 (Webster, 2011). Waghid (2000) argued that, in order to redress the past discrimination and to ensure the representation and participation of all South Africans, the Higher Education Act No. 101 of 1997 was passed. This Act also provided a policy framework for equal student access. The challenge with this Act is that it is difficult to actually ensure equal access, since not all citizens can gain access to the higher education system (Waghid, 2000). This is true especially of the black students who come from disadvantaged schooling systems that have not prepared them adequately for higher learning.

In addition, the implications of the change in the diversity of the student population were an increase in student enrolments, which, according to Mapesela (2004), caused a great deal of dissatisfaction amongst academics as active players in the change process. In the University of Free State, for example, the problem with expanded access for non-traditional learners and the change in profiles of students caused the lecture rooms to become overcrowded making it practically difficult to teach, learn and conduct assessment (Mapasela, 2004). Moreover, the new cohort coming from disadvantaged backgrounds did not seem to be adequately prepared for the challenge of university studies. This meant that academics had to attend to students' problems which were caused by this unpreparedness and a lack of finance. This took up academics' time, consequently impacting negatively on time spent

writing articles and publishing. The issue of language was also considered a problem, because lectures had to be prepared and presented in two languages, Afrikaans and English. The result was that black academics had to conduct lessons in two languages that were foreign to them and white academics of Afrikaans origin had to conduct their lectures in English as well (Monnapula-Mapesela, 2002).

The Council of Higher Education further accentuated the issue of student access by highlighting the need to increase the number of postgraduate students from diverse fields of study because their skills are needed nationally and internationally (Wolhuter et al., 2010). The problem is what happens to other roles (i.e., research and community engagement) when academics have high volumes of students. As a result, this could have a negative influence on the experiences of academics working in academia.

Policies on finance. The subsidy scheme for universities was introduced in 1986 and, in 2003, the new government revised it and added other changes (Mouton, 2012). The new funding framework had major implications for research output. Unlike the other core activities of teaching and learning and community work, research through the completion of a master's and doctoral degree and publishing in accredited journals was emphasised. In the view of Mouton (2012), research output at most South African universities is produced by a core of 30% of active scientists. This 30% includes the top institutions which are regarded as having the capability to produce in terms of research because they have the resources. According to Mouton, the top five universities between 1990 to 2010 were 1) the University of Pretoria, 2) the University of KwaZulu-Natal; 3) the University of Cape Town; 4) the University of the Witwatersrand, and 5) Stellenbosch University. The implication of this is that, as the top universities, they benefit most from the subsidies awarded by the government.

Oancea et al. (2009) claimed that the funding framework puts pressure on academics to increase research productivity by increasing the number of their postgraduates students

(mainly master's and doctoral) and publications in accredited journals. This compromises the quality and value of the increased academic workload, and is a factor in low job satisfaction among academics.

The above policies directly affect academics who are required to comply with their content. Mapesela and Hay (2006) conclude that policies in South Africa have become a major source of dissatisfaction among academics, as a result of the various demands made by the different policies.

Conclusion

As a result of the changes happening in higher education discussed above, the traditional roles of academics being facilitators of learning have changed and continue to change, with working conditions being experienced as unfavourable and unsupportive of academics' efforts to pursue the mission of higher education (Weber, 1999). According to Mapesela (2004), some of the challenges facing academics have to do with roles that have been added to their job description, such as being a facilitator, counsellor, mentor, role model and administrator. This requires academics to redefine their previous roles of lecturers, researchers and service providers in order to integrate these new roles. This is due to the growing numbers of students who enter the academic world ill-prepared and is often experienced negatively by academics.

Other problems faced by academics include overcrowded lecture rooms which make it difficult to facilitate lessons, an increase in students' problems (financial, emotional and high failure rate), the diversity of cultures, as well as lack of time to do research (Mapesela, 2004). Factors such as globalisation, internationalisation, managerialism and new managerialism, and academic capitalism have resulted in universities amending their learning programmes

and curriculum development to suit the globalised market. These factors have influenced what is taught in higher education, the type of research undertaken and the notion of knowledge production and dissemination (Ntshoe, 2002). A study by Coetzee and Rothman (2005), which focused on the identification of occupational stressors for staff in higher education, revealed that employees were stressed by aspects of their work relationships, job characteristics such as constant changes within organisations, physical working conditions and the manner in which work performance was managed.

South African policies have also had a significant impact on the work role of academics. The academic work role had to be realigned according to each policy requirement. Ntshoe et al. (2008) reported the following issues that have resulted from the change in the academic climate in South African universities:

- Increased workloads and low morale among academics
- Increased emphasis on performance, productivity, professional standards and external accountability
- Pressure to create revenue-generating programmes
- Specialisation and the complexity of university work
- Diffusion and the blurring of roles.

Parsons and Slabbert (2001) maintained that, owing to the many factors that have shaped higher education institutions, academic work is no longer merely about lecturing or writing research articles. It is a multifaceted activity with a large number of interdependent variables that affect both the quantity and the quality of the outputs academics produce. According to Ntshoe et al. (2008), the changes in the academic work role have had a negative impact on the academic profession and academics find it necessary to neglect their core

business of teaching, research and community work in order to fulfil the other duties that have been imposed on them.

Positive Experiences of Work

Introduction

This chapter is the part of the literature review which is intended to conceptualise positive experiences of work in general, and specifically positive experiences of working in academia. In order to provide context, the key concepts of positive experiences (such as subjective well-being, happiness, optimal experience, optimism and self-determination) as well as some of the psychosocial characteristics of positive experiences will be discussed. Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi's (2000) original definition of positive psychology is adopted to contextualise the understanding of positive experiences. Thereafter, positive experiences of work will be conceptualised. This will be followed by a discussion of positive experiences of working in academia which will be integrated with other aspects such as personal characteristics and enabling factors from the environment. Lastly, a new, integrated model of positive experiences of working in academia will be presented.

Rethinking Positive Psychology?

In rethinking positive psychology, the question to be asked is what positive psychology is and why it is imperative in this study. Positive psychology is used in this research as a framework within which positive experiences are conceptualised.

Authors such as Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000), Linley, Joseph, Harrington and Wood (2006) and Coetzee and Viviers (2007) have noted that there is no clear definition of positive psychology. Different authors focus on different perspectives regarding how the field can be described. The diverse description of positive psychology is indicative of the lack of a universal understanding of what the approach entails. This study adopts the initial

definition by Seligman (who is considered the 'father' of positive psychology) and Csikszentmihalyi because it is deemed as holistic and relevant for conceptualising positive experiences of work.

Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) defined what positive psychology is about as follows:

> … at the subjective level as about valued subjective experiences: well-being, contentment and satisfaction (in the past); hope and optimism (for the future) and flow and happiness (in the present). At the individual level, it is about positive individual traits: the capacity for love and vocation, courage, interpersonal skill, aesthetic sensibility, perseverance, forgiveness, originality, future mindedness, spirituality, high talent and wisdom. At the group level, it is about the civic virtues and the institutions that move individuals toward better citizenship, responsibility, nurturance, altruism, civility, moderation, tolerance and work ethic (p. 5).

In the above definition, Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) took into consideration the dimensions of space and time. The issue of space emphasises how people's behaviour is influenced by interaction with different environments. Time focuses on understanding interaction patterns from the past, the present and, lastly, the future. The dimensions of space and time could further be punctuated at three intervention levels: between individuals (subjective), intra or within (individual) and between people (group/community).

Authors such as Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000), Wright and Lopez (2002), Snyder and Lopez (2001) and Linley et al. (2006) describe positive psychology from different angles. Nevertheless, they all view positive psychology as a framework within which the world is viewed. As a result, positive psychology can be understood on an epistemological

and a theoretical level. On an epistemological level, positive psychology can be understood as a way of being, knowing and doing. Epistemology is defined as the methods and sources by which useful knowledge is obtained (Nwoye, 2015). Positive psychology as a theory focuses on optimal functioning by incorporating many different constructs such as well-being, flow, hope, love, wisdom, altruism, tolerance and so forth, which can be applied on an individual, group and organisational or community level.

Based on the definition and explanation of positive psychology given above, the next section will define and describe positive experiences.

Conceptualising Positive Experiences

After defining and adopting a definition of positive psychology, it is important to critically review some of the constructs that have been adopted to conceptualise positive experiences. Since the constructs that define positive experiences are not the focus of this study, they will be described at a high level and their contribution to this study will be highlighted. Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000), in line with their definition of positive psychology, argued that comprehensive positive experiences capture the following constructs: from the past, subjective well-being (Diener, 2000), in the present, optimal experience (Massimini & Delle Fave, 2000) and happiness (Myers, 2000; R. M. Ryan & Deci, 2000); and, in the future, optimism (Peterson, 2000). In addition to these constructs, the self-determination theory of motivation (S. E. Taylor, Kemeny, Reed, Bower, & Gruenewald, 2000) and the psychosocial characteristics (Salovey, Rothman, Detweiler, & Steward, 2000) have been applied to describe positive experiences. Below are the definitions and discussions of these constructs.

Subjective wellbeing (SWB). Prior to describing SWB it is essential to unpack the concept of wellbeing because it focuses on the overall satisfaction within different life aspects such as marriage, family, work, community and so forth. The assumption with these aspects of life is that they are interrelated because, for a person to experience satisfaction in a particular aspect, the others have to be fulfilled. Wellbeing is referred to as the overall optimal psychological functioning and experience which includes the understanding of mental illness (R. M. Ryan & Deci, 2001).

Diener (2000) defined subjective well-being as people's general cognitive and affective evaluations of their life. At the centre of SWB is the emphasis that positive experiences arise when people are exposed to many pleasures and few pains. Positive experiences occur when people are engaged in interesting activities and are satisfied with one or many domains of their lives such as marriage and/or work. Subjective well-being can be used to understand studies of wellbeing (Field & Buitendach, 2011) because it emphasises the affective or cognitive reactions that illustrate subjective well-being (Warr, 2009).

According to Diener (2000), SWB is explained through different processes such as adaptation, goals and temperament. The adaptation route assumes that, since people are inherently positive, when they are exposed to negative conditions they thereafter return to their original level of happiness (Brickman & Campbell, 1971). The goal process of SWB emphasises that people adapt to new circumstances by changing their expectations and goals. This process is influenced by the availability of resources that are in line with their goals (Diener & Fujita, 1995). In this instance, SWB is a more accurate predictor of happiness than having resources that are not related to one's goals. The attainment of one's goals relates to values which influence the perception of what is good and bad which in return encourages the adaptation process. Happiness is therefore experienced when making progress towards one's goals (Cantor & Sanderson, 1999). While these authors emphasised resources and goals,

Weiten (2000) contended that happiness depends on temperament. Some people, presumably because of their personality, seem destined to be happy in spite of major setbacks while others seem destined to cling to unhappiness even though their lives seem reasonably pleasant. Furthermore, SWB has been established to be related to self-fulfilment and life satisfaction (Diener, 2000).

The factors that influence SWB need to be understood within one's cultural or societal context (Diener, 2000). Cultural and economic aspects, such as rating one's country as a first or third world, influences SWB which is related to happiness. This is because the availability of resources and having access to them as well as the meaning attached to having and not having differs across first, second and third world countries.

Happiness. Happiness is included in describing positive experiences since it is contended that it includes the concept of well-being and SWB (Bakker & Daniels, 2013; Field & Buitendach, 2011; Seligman, 2002a; Waterman, 1993). Ryan and Deci (2001) argued that, initially, there were the hedonic and eudemonic views of describing happiness.

a) Hedonic view of happiness

Uchida, Norasakkunkit, and Kitayama (2004) defined happiness as the presence of a high ratio of positive feelings to negative feelings. Such definitions are in line with the hedonic view of happiness (Warr, 2002a). The hedonic view holds that people experience immediate maximum pleasure over the avoidance of pain (R. M. Ryan & Deci, 2001; Swart & Rothmann, 2012; Warr, 2002a). Proponents of this view argue that "happiness is thus not reducible to physical hedonism, for it can be derived from attainment of goals or valued outcomes in varied realms" (Ryan & Deci, 2001, p. 144). According to Warr (2002a), related terms within

the hedonic perspective include delight, elation, exhilaration, joy, contentment, comfort, satisfaction, serenity and bliss.

b) Eudaimonic view of happiness

Another form of happiness which was introduced by Aristotle (384–322 BC) is the eudaimonic view. Authors such as McGregor and Little (1998), Seligman (2002b) and Peterson, Park and Seligman (2005) criticised the fragmented description of the hedonic view of happiness, preferring instead the eudaimonic view of happiness. The eudaimonic view emphasises that happiness should not only be viewed in terms of transitory pleasure. According to Myers (2000), happiness refers to deeper emotions that are more lasting than a momentary good mood, and it develops from the long-lasting and enduring pleasure that emanates from living in accordance with one's true self (R. M. Ryan, Huta, & Deci, 2008). This includes living well rather than feeling good, engaging in the best capacities to pursue virtue and excellence, continuously engaging in reflectivity and deliberation concerning actions and aims, and pursuing excellence through voluntary actions (Swart & Rothmann, 2012). The eudaimonic approach argues that outcomes, even though they do not bring immediate pleasure, can promote happiness (R. M. Ryan & Deci, 2001). Wong (2011) argued that long-lasting happiness cannot be obtained by focusing on the philosophical paradigm only. The focus should include moderating factors that influence happiness.

Given the two different views of happiness, hedonic and eudaimonic, a contemporary integrated description of happiness by Seligman (2002a) is adopted in this research.

An integrated model of happiness. According to Seligman (2002a), happiness is an individual's experience of a sense of joy, satisfaction and positive well-being that combines

with a sense that one's life is good, meaningful and worthwhile. In line with this definition of happiness, Seligman's integrated model of happiness includes both the hedonic and eudaimonic views (Peterson et al., 2005). As initially pointed out by Seligman (2002a) and shown in Figure 6, there are three possible orientations to happiness.

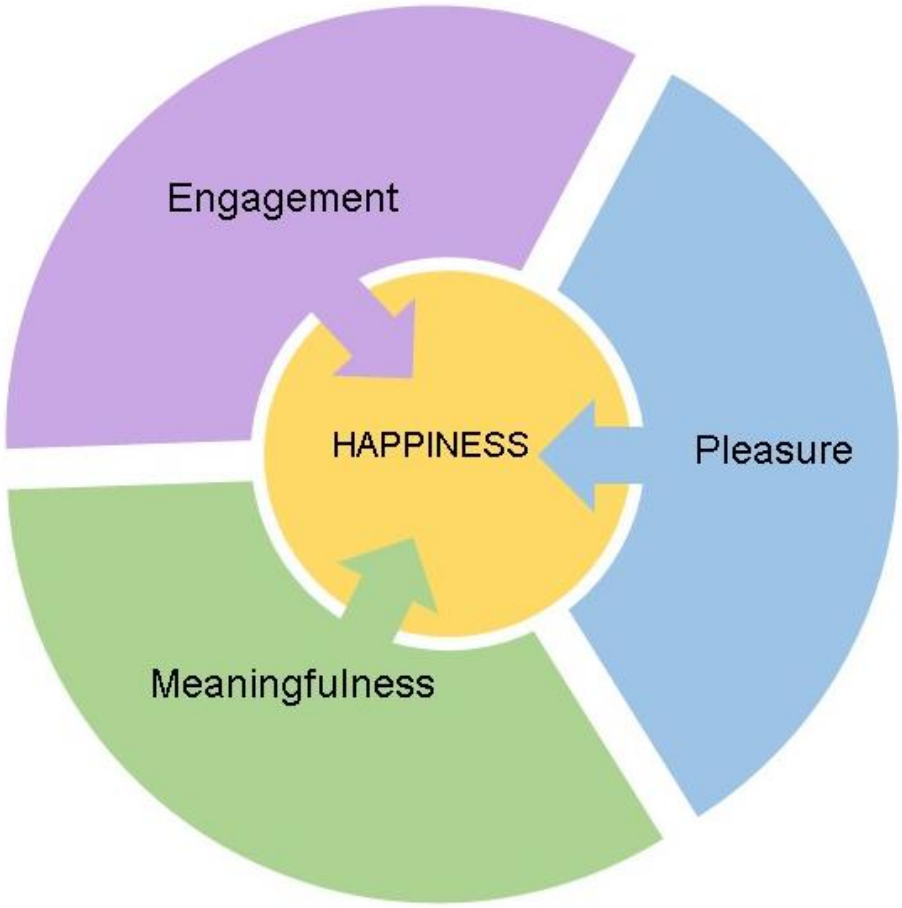

Figure 6. Three routes to happiness: Pleasure, meaningfulness and engagement

As illustrated in Figure 6, the three routes to happiness are: pleasure (the pleasant life), meaningfulness (a meaningful life) and engagement (a good life) (Peterson et al., 2005). The first orientation, pleasure, allows individuals to have maximum pleasure through experiencing positive affect. The experience of happiness that results in pleasure is, however, limited since it is not controlled by the individual. There are certain external stimuli that must be present and, if they are removed, the pleasure experience fades away. It is on this basis that happiness through this route is regarded as short-lived (Peterson et al., 2005). This

type of happiness is regarded as linked to extrinsic motivation since it relies on the presence of certain stimuli.

The experience of engagement is influenced by, amongst others things, the state of flow which occurs when an individual experiences the optimal combination of skills and challenges (Moneta & Csikszentmihalyi, 1996). An engaged life permits individuals to become aware of the strengths which they own and could continuously improve on in different areas of their lives such as, in the context of this study, work.

The last route to happiness is meaningfulness which occurs when individuals are aware of both their strengths and the talents which they use in the service of something they believe to be bigger than they are.

Factors having a positive relationship with happiness. Myers (2000) identified the following factors as having a positive relationship with happiness: economic growth and personal income, close relationships and religious faith. Close relationships include relationships with family, friends and work colleagues. They further include attachment between people such as those who are married. According to Diener (2000), in terms of the economic and political context, there is a tendency for wealthy nations to have more satisfied people because national wealth is tied up with civil rights, literacy and the number of continuous years of democracy (Diener, 2000). Diener (2000) further stated that some affluent cultures that are characterised by political freedom are conducive to increased satisfaction with life or more positive emotions and, as a result, produce relatively happy people. Similarly, it is reported that, in poor countries, being relatively well off does predict greater wellbeing as compared to being poor. It is interesting to note in this regard, however, that in some lists of the happiest countries in the world, less affluent nations such as Bhutan (Canan, 2018), Mexico (Buettner & Fuentes, 2018), Costa Rica and Puerto Rico (Breene,

2016)have featured prominently, and Breene (2016) noted that this calls into question how such happiness is measured and who measures it.

Emotionality as the main predictor of happiness has also been identified as changing with maturity with more focus on satisfaction with social relations and health becoming important later in one's life (Myers, 2000). In addition, certain traits such as extroversion and certain temperaments have been identified as influencing the experience of happiness, but such traits, even if they are genetic, are not fixed. Interestingly, gender does not seem to be a factor that influences happiness as men and women are equally likely to declare themselves as very happy and satisfied with their lives (Myers, 2000). The characteristics of happy people include being less self-focused, less hostile and abusive and less vulnerable to diseases. Such people report more loving, forgiving, trusting, energetic, decisive, creative, sociable and helpful relationships (Myers, 1993; Veenhoven, 1988).

Optimal experience. Optimal experience or flow takes place when there are high environmental challenges that match with adequate personal skills. During this experience there is a high level of affect, concentration and involvement (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975, 1978, 1988). There is control of the situation, focused attention, positive feedback about the quality of performance, perceived loss of self-consciousness, and clear ideas about the aims of the activity (Massimini & Delle Fave, 2000).

Flow or quality of experience has been linked to being intrinsically motivated and to engagement (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Intrinsic motivation is transferred during flow when people are involved in the activity for the sake of the experience and not of extrinsic rewards. Engagement is experienced when there are high levels of concentration, alertness, active participation and perception of the importance of the activity (Delle Fave & Bassi, 1998). When people are engaged in these activities they experience a sense of fulfilment and

direction because such activities are in line with their personal values and goals. These people are inclined to experience a sense of happiness with regard to their outlook to life.

Optimism. According to Tiger (1979), "optimism as a personality characteristic is defined as a mood or attitude associated with an expectation about the social or material future which a person regards as socially desirable to his [or her] advantage, or for his [or her] pleasure" (p. 18). The implication of this definition is that optimism is influenced by what the person regards as desirable. In Tiger's view, optimism contributes to human evolution. This happens when people start to think about the future, many the possibilities and consequences including their own morality. Tiger therefore regards optimism as characterised by being easy to think, easy to learn and pleasing (Peterson, 2000). Optimism is regarded as both cognitive and emotional with a motivational component (Scheier & Carver, 1985).

Peterson (2000) is of the view that one's experiences influence the degree to which one is regarded as optimistic or pessimistic. In addition, optimism enters into self-regulation when people ask themselves about the obstacles to achieving the goal they have adopted (Peterson, 2000). During the process of optimism there are continued efforts to attain the goal, whereas pessimism leads to giving up (Peterson, 2000). Another important influence on optimism is the availability of resources. It is important that resources are made available as a support aspect to enable individuals to achieve control over their specific events. The lack of identified resources would imply placing pressure on individuals regardless of the effort they put into their work. Furthermore, this could overshadow the fact that "Optimism which has been linked to positive mood and good morale, perseverance, effective problem solving, academic, athletic, military, occupational and political success, popularity, good health, long life and freedom from trauma This is contrary to pessimism which foreshadows depression, passivity, failure, social estrangement, morbidity and mortality" (Peterson, 2000, p.44). As

this suggests, besides being positively correlated to good health, optimism is linked to perseverance and associated with a good choice of goals. This reflects the reality component of optimism. If optimism is in the form of wishful thinking, it can distract people from making concrete plans about how to attain goals.

There are two different types of optimism: dispositional optimism and explanatory style optimism. Dispositional optimism focuses on the global expectation that good things will be plentiful in the future and bad things will be scarce (Scheier & Carver, 1985). According to an explanatory style of optimism, individuals who explain bad events in a circumscribed way, with external, unstable and specific causes, are described as optimistic and those who favour internal, stable and global causes are regarded as pessimistic (Buchanan & Seligman, 1995).

Self-determination theory of motivation. According to Ryan and Deci (2000), self-determination theory (SDT) was identified as a theory that underlies positive experiences by emphasising self-determination as a prerequisite of the motivation process. SDT explains the optimal functioning, well-being and integration of personality by focusing on competence, autonomy and relatedness. Competence and autonomy are described as being intrinsically motivated. Relatedness is linked to extrinsic motivation whereby individuals model the behaviour of a significant other to whom they feel attached or related. This belonging or connectedness with the perceived role models allows for the internalisation of behaviour which under normal circumstances would not have been adopted. Ryan and Deci (2000) draw a distinction between amotivation, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation to explain the processes of satisfying needs.

a) Amotivation

Amotivation was highlighted as part of the self-determination continuum that results from not valuing an activity (R. M. Ryan, 1995) performed to satisfy an external demand, not feeling competent to do it (Bandura, 1986) or not expecting it to yield a desired outcome (Seligman, 1975).

b) Intrinsic motivation

Intrinsic motivation is doing an activity for the inherent satisfaction of the activity itself (R. M. Ryan & Deci, 2000). Social factors such as communication, feedback and rewards contribute towards feelings of competence. These factors in turn enhance intrinsic motivation. Furthermore, choice, acknowledgement of feelings, and opportunities for self-direction have been found to enhance intrinsic motivation because they allow people feelings of autonomy. Feelings of competence, if accompanied by autonomy, will enhance intrinsic motivation. For intrinsic motivation to occur, self-determination behaviour must be present. On the contrary, threats, directives, deadlines, pressured evaluations, and imposed goals diminish intrinsic motivation because they are conducive to a perceived external locus of causality. These factors contribute to what is perceived as control. In contrast, intrinsic motivation is associated more with interest, excitement, and confidence, which in turn is manifested as enhanced performance, persistence, and creativity (Deci & Ryan, 1991; Sheldon, Ryan, Rawsthorne, & Ilardi, 1997), heightened vitality (Nix, Ryan, Manly, & Deci, 1999), self-esteem (Deci & Ryan, 1995), and general well-being (R. M. Ryan, Deci, & Grolnick, 1995).

c) Extrinsic motivation

Extrinsically motivated behaviours are referred to as externally regulated because such behaviours are performed to satisfy an external demand or reward contingency (R. M. Ryan & Deci, 2000). The different types of extrinsic motivated behaviour are: 1) introjected regulation which involves taking in a regulation but not fully accepting it as one's own, that is, it is internally driven even though it has a perceived external locus of control; 2) regulation through identification which reflects a conscious valuing of a behavioural goal or regulation such that the action is accepted or owned as personally important; and 3) integrated regulation which occurs when identified regulations are fully assimilated to the self, which means that they have been evaluated and brought into congruence with one's values and needs.

People initially perform extrinsically motivated actions because the behaviours are modelled or valued by significant others to whom they feel attached or related. This suggests that relatedness, the need to feel belongingness and connectedness with others, is centrally important for internalisation. Internalisation is more likely to occur when there are ambient supports for feelings of relatedness. Internalisation and integration are crucial for personal experience and behavioural outcomes, and it therefore becomes significant to nurture them, especially in extrinsically motivated behaviour.

Furthermore, internalisation of extrinsically motivated activities is a function of perceived competence. People are more likely to adopt activities that relevant social groups value when they feel efficacious with respect to those activities. The experience of autonomy facilitates internalisation and is a critical element for a regulation to be integrated. Failing to support competence, autonomy and

relatedness contributes to alienation and ill-being. People can only experience a sense of happiness in their lives when they have met their needs for autonomy, competence and relatedness.

Psychosocial Characteristics of Positive Experiences

The psychosocial characteristics that influence people to cope actively and proactively with health and to minimise the adverse physiological effects of stress are used in this study to understand positive experiences. Characteristics such as optimism, personal control and sense of meaning are known to be protective of mental health in the context of traumatic or life-threatening events, and protective of physical health as well (S. E. Taylor et al., 2000). Positive illusions are considered to play an important function during severe physical life threatening events. People who adopt positive illusions in the face of life-threatening illnesses find meaning in the experiences (S. E. Taylor, 1983). These people do not tend towards depression and despair. Positive beliefs also may be connected to the management of physical diseases by promoting better health behaviours. This is indicated by the fact that people who have a positive sense of self-worth, belief in their own control and optimism about the future may be more likely to practice conscientious health habits and to use services appropriately.

A third basis for predicting a relationship between positive beliefs and course of illness is based on the fact that positive emotional states are believed to be associated with good social relationships (S. E. Taylor & Brown, 1988). Furthermore, optimistic people tend to have additional social support which they tend to utilise during time of stress (Taylor, 2001).

Possible contribution of conceptualising positive experiences. In this research, the constructs outlined above were used to provide an understanding of positive experiences.

The application of these different constructs takes into consideration the cognitive, emotional and physical aspects of positive subjective processes. The use of these different constructs is regarded as providing a general description of positive experiences and, therefore, their application and meaning need to be further established in other different contexts. Since this research falls within the work context, in the next section, Warr's (2002a) model of subjective well-being is adopted to conceptualise positive experiences of work.

Conceptualisation of Positive Experiences of Work

From the description above, it becomes clear that the general conceptualisation of subjective positive experiences is integrated according to different constructs. In this section, the focus is on understanding positive experiences of job-related wellbeing since this research takes place within the work context.

As indicated above, SWB is a general construct of evaluating positive life satisfaction or wellbeing. The two sub-constructs of SWB are positive and negative affect (Diener, 2000). According to Diener (2000), positive affect can be divided into joy, elation, contentment, pride, affection, happiness and ecstasy. Negative affect, on the other hand, consists of guilt, shame, sadness, anxiety, anger, stress, depression and envy. A person who has a high level of satisfaction with their life, and who experiences greater positive affect and little or less negative affect, would be deemed very happy or have high levels of SWB (R. L. Kahn & Juster, 2002).

In the work place generally, individuals with higher SWB tend to have closer and more supportive social relationships than individuals with low baseline life satisfaction (Diener & Biswas-Diener, 2008). According to Staw, Sutton and Pelled (1994), they also tend to be more productive, dependable and creative, and tend to achieve an overall higher work quality

while on the job. They also have high levels of organisational citizenship, which means that they are more likely to do tasks not required by their job, such as helping co-workers (Diener & Biswas Diener, 2008). According to Tov and Diener (2008), high SWB people engage in altruistic prosocial activities such as volunteering for communities and charity groups. In a nutshell, SWB affects individuals and organisational outcomes in a positive manner (Bowling, Eschleman, & Wang, 2010).

Warr's (2002b) model of SWB is deemed appropriate in this study to describe positive experiences of work. Figure 7 shows and outline a description of that model.

Model of subjective wellbeing

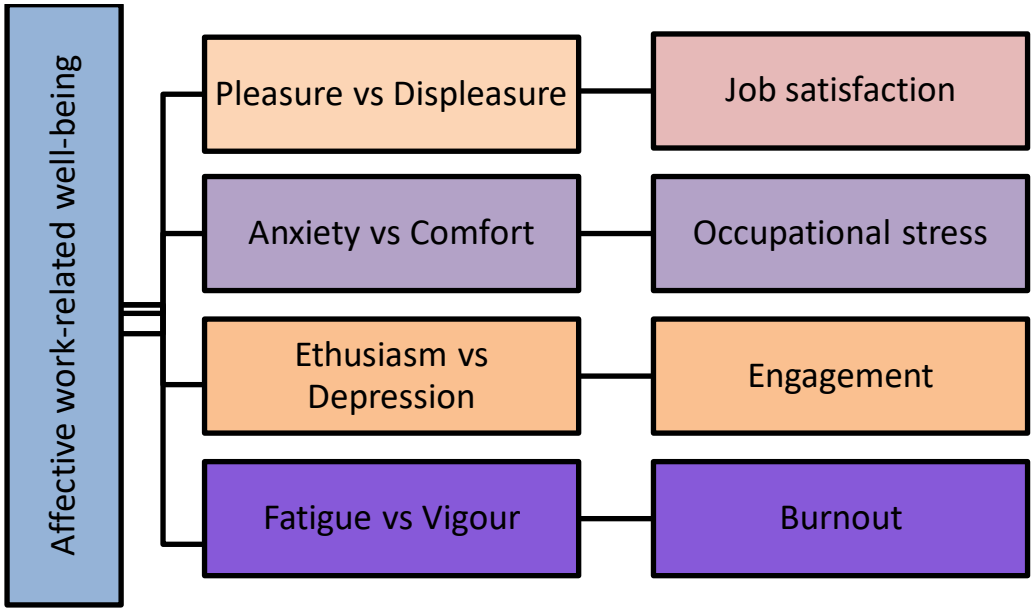

Figure 7. Model of subjective well-being (Warr, 2002)

Warr (2002b) initially constructed work-related wellbeing along three dimensions, namely, pleasure–displeasure, anxiety–comfort and enthusiasm–depression, but later allowed the possibility of a fourth dimension which covered fatigue–vigour (Rothmann, 2008).

In Warr's (2002b) model, job satisfaction forms part of the pleasure–displeasure dimension of work-related well-being. This implies that pleasure is felt when people

experience positive events in their work. Displeasure is experienced during negative events. This is the first domain of the model. The second domain of the model describes the stress process. Stress is characterised by a high level of anxiety and a low level of comfort. This implies that when people are feeling anxious they are exposed to a combination of low pleasure and high mental arousal, while comfort is explained as low-arousal pleasure (Warr, 2007). Burnout forms part of the vigour–fatigue dimension (Rothmann, 2008). The last positive state, engagement, is experienced when there are feelings of enthusiasm versus depression. When depressed, people experience low pleasure and low mental arousal. Enthusiasm and positive feelings occur when there is high mental arousal (Warr, 2007).

Warr's model of subjective well-being is limited to job satisfaction and engagement. These concepts are explored below. Job satisfaction will be described first and thereafter engagement will be described under happiness as a related construct that describes positive behaviour in the present by considering the environmental factors and personal characteristics. Another construct, flow, which is related to happiness, will be discussed later in the chapter.

Job satisfaction. An old definition by Locke (1969) described job satisfaction as:

> … the pleasurable emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job as facilitating the achievement of one's job values. Job dissatisfaction is the unpleasurable emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job as frustrating or blocking the attainment of one's job values (p. 316).

This definition is adopted because it emphasises the affective and cognitive elements of job satisfaction (Locke, 1969). Sempane et al. (2002) and Oshagbemi (1999) agreed with Locke that job satisfaction has to do with an individual's perception and evaluation of his or

her job. Sempane et al. (2002) added that the perception of job satisfaction is influenced by the person's unique circumstances such as needs, values and expectations.

Because a lot of research has been conducted on the concept of job satisfaction as compared to the other constructs applied in the study, there exist different theories that can be applied simultaneously to meet the aim of the study. Using multiple theories is required because it is assumed that job satisfaction in work contexts is a complex phenomenon and so an integrated approach is necessary to understand it. In this study, both the needs and process theories are described. Needs theories focus on the relationship between one's needs and the expected efforts to fulfil them. Process theories emphasise mental thought processes in determining worker motivation and satisfaction (Ololube, 2006).

One of the needs theories that is helpful is in explaining the concept of job satisfaction is Herzberg, Mausner and Snyderman's (1959) two-factor theory which is explained below.

Two-factor theory. The two-factor theory emphasises the attainment of needs or goals as contributing towards job satisfaction (Herzberg et al., 1959). This theory proposes that job satisfaction and dissatisfaction comprise intrinsic and extrinsic factors as indicated in Table 1. The intrinsic variables relate to personal growth and development. These factors are also referred to as motivators or satisfiers, which are responsible for job satisfaction. The availability of intrinsic factors causes happy feelings or positive attitude (Perrachione, Rosser, & Petersen, 2008). They are therefore responsible for job satisfaction. Hertzberg et al. (1959) named the second group of variables the hygiene factors. These are extrinsic factors that have to do with job tasks or content (Buitendach & Rothmann, 2009). They are associated with the security of the work environment. The extrinsic factors do not contribute to job satisfaction when present, but rather to job dissatisfaction when absent (Perrachione et al., 2008).

Table 1

Intrinsic and extrinsic factors

Intrinsic factors	**Extrinsic factors**
Recognition	Salary
Possibility for growth	Interpersonal relations – supervisor
Advancement	Interpersonal relations – subordinates
Responsibility	Interpersonal relations – peers
Work itself	Supervision – technical
	Company policy and administration
	Working conditions
	Factors in personal life
	Status
	Job security

Huang, You & Tsai (2012) posited a similar theory, arguing that satisfaction may be both intrinsic, derived from internally mediated rewards such as the job itself and opportunity for personal growth, and extrinsic, resulting from externally mediated rewards such as pay, company policies and support, supervisor and co-worker and chance for promotion. Mitonga-Monga (2015) confirmed the influence of extrinsic influences, pointing out that various studies from different occupational work settings have revealed that employees' job satisfaction is related to aspects of a company's organisational climate (i.e., policies and supervisory practice).

Locke's value theory. One of the most prominent theories of positive work experience is Locke's (1969) value theory which is also referred to as the goal-setting and commitment theory. Griffin and Moorhead (2010) clarified that this theory emphasises that, when employees perceive that the goals that they set for themselves or are set by their managers are fulfilling and attainable, their commitment, and therefore productivity, will increase. This

will result in a pleasurable emotional state or job satisfaction. Job dissatisfaction or a non-pleasurable emotional state is a function of the size of the perceived discrepancy between the intended and the actual performance (Miner, 2005).

Goal setting and job satisfaction. In a study of goal-setting, Häsänen, Hellgren and Hansson (2011) found that rewarding employees for improved performance, giving feedback and recognising their performance, providing organisational support through a supervisor, getting support from their managers, letting employees participate in setting goals and having low levels of goal-conflict and goal-stress affected job satisfaction positively.

From the above it seems that the presence of certain job and environmental characteristics are necessary and contribute to job satisfaction, while their absence could lead to job dissatisfaction. Worker characteristics can also contribute to job satisfaction.

Worker characteristics and job satisfaction. Worker characteristics are included in the discussion of job satisfaction even though they contradict Hertzberg et al.'s (1959) two-factor theory. This is necessary because this study is exploratory and the contradiction is therefore expected to assist in explaining some of the unexpected behaviour. These characteristics include biographical information such as age, gender, work experience and so forth. Petty, Brewer, and Brown (2005) argued that understanding demographic characteristics assists in shifting the focus from the employer context to the individual context of employees.

Engagement. Along with pleasure and meaning, engagement is a key route to happiness in Seligman's (2002a) integrated model of happiness. Pleasure was discussed earlier. However, engagement has been most often studied in the context of work. Therefore, it is logical to discuss it here as part of the conceptualisation of positive experiences of work. It is particularly relevant here as one of the domains of Warr's (2002b)

model of SWB is engagement and, like job satisfaction, engagement can be seen as a form of expression of positive work experiences.

Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) as well as Maslach and Leiter (1997) maintained that work engagement was initially conceptualised as the antithesis of burnout. This implies that work that has started out as important, meaningful and challenging can shift to work that is unpleasant, unfulfilling and meaningless. From the burnout antithesis, engagement is characterised by energy, involvement and efficacy. These three characteristics are regarded as direct opposites of the three burnout dimensions, which are exhaustion, cynicism and lack of professional efficacy.

In contrast, W. A. Kahn (1990) referred to engagement as the state in which individuals express their entire selves physically, cognitively and emotionally in their work roles. When individuals are engaged in their work, they will express this by being psychologically and emotionally attached to doing something towards the improvement of the organisation (W. A. Kahn, 1990). Schaufeli, Salanova, González-Romá, & Bakker (2002) posited a similar definition, arguing that "work engagement is a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterised by vigour, dedication and absorption" (p. 74). Vigour refers to high levels of energy and mental resilience while one is working. It is the willingness to invest effort in one's work, not being easily fatigued and persistence even in the face of difficulty. Dedication is observed when one is involved in the job and experiencing a sense of significance from one's work, and is complemented by experiences of enthusiasm, inspiration and challenge. Unlike the other two sub-constructs of engagement, absorption takes place when there is high concentration levels and immersion in work-related activities and difficulty detaching oneself from them.

The similarities between W. A. Kahn's (1990) and Schaufeli et al.'s (2002) definitions are that they viewed engagement from a positive perspective, and therefore independently

from burnout. In this research, Schaufeli et al.'s (2002) definition is adopted. This is because, as Salanova and Schaufeli (2008) pointed out, this definition emphasises the affective and cognitive aspects and further highlights the energy element of work engagement.

In addition to Schaufeli et al.'s (2002) definition, this research uses the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model to explain the antecedents of work engagement. The JD-R model emphasises job demands and job resources as the predictors of work engagement (Bakker, Schaufeli, Leiter, & Taris, 2008; J. L. P. Naudé & Rothmann, 2006). Job resources are physical, psychological, social or organisational aspects of the job that are responsible for achieving work goals, reducing job demands or stimulating personal growth, learning and development (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). Rothmann and Rothmann Jr (2010) reported that job resources (growth opportunities, organisational support, social support and advancement) were positively associated with employee engagement. Other job resources include salary, supervisor or co-worker support and participation in decision-making (Rothmann & Jordaan, 2006; Schaufeli, 2013). Field and Buitendach (2011) found a significant positive relationship between affective organisational commitment and work engagement and also between work engagement and happiness.

Job resources can play either an intrinsic or extrinsic motivational role (Bakker et al., 2008; Rothmann & Jordaan, 2006). An intrinsic motivational role is created when job resources foster employees' growth, learning and development. Such roles occur when job resources are instrumental in achieving work goals. Extrinsic motivations may be seen at an organisational level, where the benefits of engaged employees are that they continue with the organisation, they become advocates of the organisation and they contribute to the success of their organisations either through profit making or improving the culture because, amongst other things, they are regarded as motivated (Kumar & Sia, 2012).

Personal resources are aspects of the self that are associated with resiliency or the ability to control and influence one's environment effectively, namely, self-efficacy and emotional stability. It is assumed from this model that the accessibility of resources mobilises employees, encourages their persistence and makes them focus on their efforts. Mostert and Rothmann (2006) similarly reported that work engagement was predicted by conscientiousness, emotional stability and low stress due to job demands. J. L. P. Naudé and Rothmann (2006) seemed to support this when they reported in their study of work-related well-being of emergency workers in Gauteng that burnout seems to start with a gradual depletion of the emotional resources of these workers. This is related to lack of job resources in general and a weak sense of coherence, because people with a strong sense of coherence were found to experience engagement (J. L. P. Naudé & Rothmann, 2006).

According to the JD-R model, work engagement is the relationship between job and personal resources on the one hand and positive outcomes on the other.

Meaningfulness. Meaning is another key route to happiness according to Seligman's (2002a) model. The concept of meaning as one of the routes to happiness is associated with Victor Frankl, who wrote the book titled "*Man's search for meaning"* (1984) which focuses on making sense or meaning during difficult times (Bellah, Sullivan, Madsen, Swidler, & Tipton, 1985).Meaning-making is characterised by people re-evaluating their events to find meaning. The benefit of this process is that it allows people to transform their perceptions of circumstances from unfortunate to fortunate (De Beers, 2007).

According to Bellah et al. (1985), meaning is a significant personal experience that one encounters during one's working life. Bellah et al. described this individualised experience as manifesting in the expression of work as (1) a job, (2) a career and (3) a calling. Work as a job is seen as providing individuals with material rewards which they use to gain other resources which they regard as meaningful outside their working context. This is because

such individuals gain little satisfaction from work-related activities. Work as a career is viewed as providing occupational advancement rather than just monetary rewards. The perceived power, influence and higher social status that come with the job bring more meaning than other benefits. Unlike the other two expressions, work as a calling involves obtaining fulfilment from engaging in work activities and not in financial gains or career advancement.

Research on happiness in the workplace. Warr (2002a) identified the following factors as being fundamental to happiness in the workplace: positive contact with other people, a manageable workload and goals, the belief that one is doing something worthwhile, variety in tasks, skills or location, some personal control (discretion or location), supportive and considerate supervision, a sense of involvement in changes, the opportunity to use acquired personal skills, a reasonably clear role, recognition of achievements, the freedom to raise ideas and be heard, a sense of job security, equity-shares expectations, fairness, an absence of discrimination, safe and comfortable surroundings, and doing a job that is valued by the organisation and society.

A study by Swart and Rothmann (2012) that investigated managers' orientations to happiness and the relationship to individual and organisational outcomes revealed that the three orientations to happiness (pleasure, meaning and engagement) impacted job satisfaction and organisational commitment indirectly through subjective wellbeing. Subjective wellbeing had a strong direct and positive effect on job satisfaction, as well as a positive indirect effect on organisational commitment.

Flow. The concept of work as a calling is similar to the construct of flow or optimal experience that that Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) adopted to describe positive experiences and that Bakker and Daniels (2013) regarded as a dimension of well-being. Flow is described as "the state in which people are so involved in an activity that nothing else

seems to matter; the experience itself is so enjoyable that people will do it even at a great cost, for the sheer sake of doing it" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, p. 4). This description implies that during flow there are intense emotions and there is a flow of energy within and through the system.

Within the work environment, flow is experienced even if the environment is not conducive for work (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Episodes of flow are seen during motivating and challenging tasks. This is because many motivated activities yield a sense of flow in conditions where goals are clear and difficult, a person's skills match the level of challenge, and he or she is motivated for success (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997). Csikszentmihalyi (2012) further stipulated that, during flow, people prefer to get engaged in a situation where they will learn as opposed to win. According to Warr (2002a), this is because, during a flow experience, people do not feel pleasure because they are too involved in the task to consider subjective states and only when they reflect do they often report having been in a positive mode.

Dimensions of flow. According to Csikszentmihalyi (2012), for the experience of flow to occur, attention must be focused on a limited stimulus and concentration must be great. As a result, the action and awareness merge. This means that the observer and the actor are not separated. There is only the participant, moving in harmony with something else he or she is part of. Furthermore, there is freedom from worry about failure. Self-consciousness disappears; that is, there is no awareness of the self. Sense of time also becomes distorted. The experience becomes its own reward or autotelic.

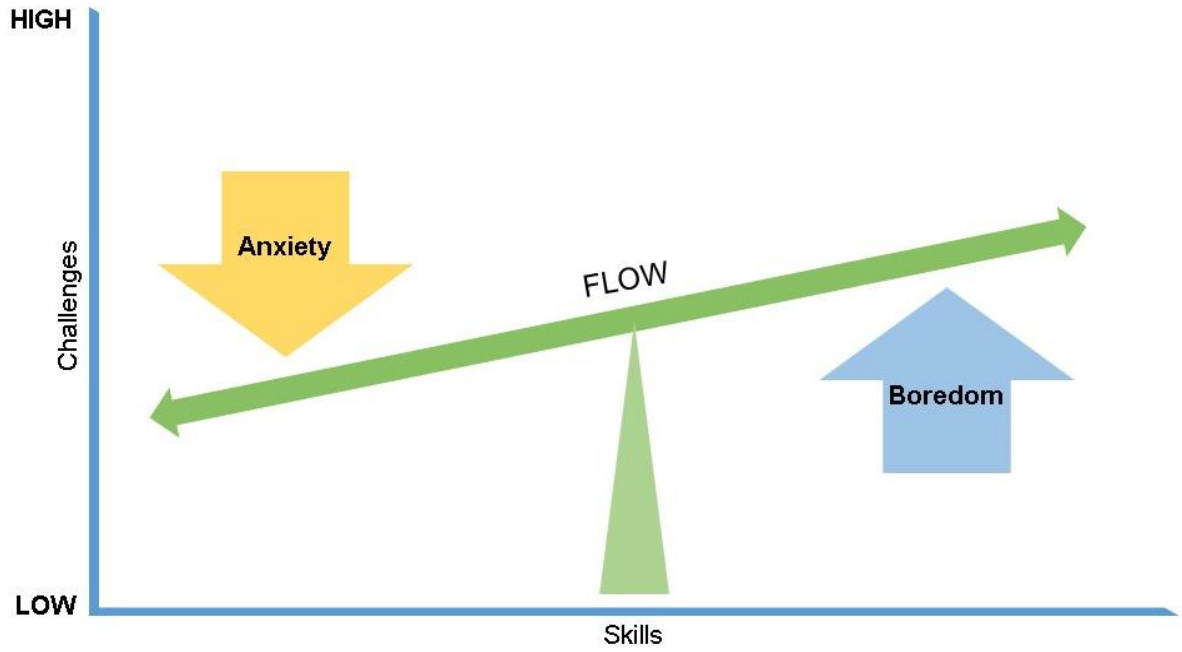

Figure 8. Flow model (Csikszentmihalyi, 2013)

According to the flow model illustrated in Figure 8 flow requires a balance of skills (action capabilities), and challenges (action opportunities). Flow therefore would seem to occur when there is equilibrium between skills and challenges. If the challenges outweigh the skills, this leads to anxiety. In contrast, if the skills surpass the challenges, boredom results (De Beers, 2007). During the process of flow, individuals further experience a sense that they have clear attainable goals and immediate feedback about the progress is being made (De Beers, 2007). "As people master challenges in an activity, they develop greater levels of skill, and the activity ceases to be as involving as before. In order to continue experiencing flow, they must identify and engage in progressively more complex challenges" (Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2002, p. 92). Flow may occasionally occur by chance, but is more likely to result from a structured activity or from an individual's ability to make flow occur or both (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).

According to Warr (2002a), the frequency and intensity of positive states during the experience of flow are likely to influence more extended feelings of well-being. This results

in the experience of flow and SWB being interdependent over time, although they remain conceptually separate. As a result, flow contributes to optimal experience (Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2002).

Research on flow in the workplace. The experience of flow is also closely linked to the concept of happiness (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975; Warr, 2002a). According to Csikszentmihalyi (1999), the relationship between flow and the first form of happiness (hedonic) is not entirely self-evident. The relationship is clearer with the second form of happiness (eudaimonic), which is viewed as less dependent on the actual content of an activity than on the presence of a combination of characteristics giving rise to flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1999). Flow is also related to engagement (S. E. Coetzee & Rothmann, 2005; De Beers, 2007) and emphasises absorption, which is the cognitive component of engagement (van Zyl et al., 2010).

Csikszentmihalyi (Csikszentmihalyi, 1992, 1995, 1997) indicated that there are a number of measurable effects of the flow experience. These include creativity, talent development, productivity, stress reduction and improved self-esteem. As a result, flow contributes to optimal experience (Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2002). According to Warr (2002a), the frequency and intensity of positive states during the experience of flow are likely to influence more extended feelings of well-being. This results in the experience of flow and subjective wellbeing becoming interdependent over time.

Flow has been found to be more prevalent at work than in leisure (Csikszentmihalyi & LeFevre, 1989), most especially in scholarly and creative work (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996). Pilke (2004) found that activities requiring thinking in information technology use were found to be related to states of flow. Bryce and Haworth (2002) found that women associated flow with activities such as problem solving and organising tasks, while men experienced flow when completing projects.

In their study investigating the activities and job characteristics that predict flow states at work, Nielsen and Cleal (2010) found that line managers in elder care experienced flow more often than accountancy line managers, and activities such as planning, problem solving, and evaluation predicted transient flow states. The more stable job characteristics such as role clarity, influence and cognitive demands were not, however, found to predict flow at work. This contradicts what Csikszentmihalyi (1992, 1995, 1997) claimed about flow. This contradiction will be considered during the interpretation of the results.

In a study by Bryce and Haworth (2002), associations were found between flow and job satisfaction, enthusiasm, and contentment.

Implication of conceptualising positive experiences of work. Positive experiences of work are conceptualised according to Warr's (2002a) model of SWB which emphasises job satisfaction and engagement. Since this application is limited to only two constructs (job satisfaction and engagement), happiness (engagement; and meaningfulness) and flow which are related to SWB were included to create a more nuanced conceptualisation of positive experiences at work. In addition, the implications of these constructs in the work context were also highlighted. As a result, the assumption is that the constructs described above could be applied in different work contexts including academia. This, however, raises the need to acknowledge related research in each specific work context to enable the contextualisation of the different constructs. In the next section the focus will be only on the research of these constructs as applied in academia and, thereafter, their implications in this study.

Conceptualisation of Positive Experiences of Working in an Academic Context

This study aims at understanding positive experiences of working in academia by including the personal characteristics and enabling factors from the environment. Although the focus of this study is on subjective experiences of the present, the inclusion of job satisfaction as a construct from the past is necessary because it describes the enabling factors from the work environment that contribute holistically to positive experiences of working in academia. From the present, research on meaning and engagement which lead to happiness will be described. Research on flow which is related to happiness, especially in academia, is also included. Since the description and application of the different constructs has been handled above, this section will focus on the description of the current research conducted in academia and its implications in this research. Furthermore, all these constructs from the past and present will be integrated to indicate their description of holistic positive experiences of working in academia.

Previous research on job satisfaction in academia. According to Mapesela and Hay (2006), there is evidence that staff satisfaction in higher education in South Africans is impeded by, among other things, poor salaries and remuneration. Respondents claimed that their salaries were very low and not competitive with other South African higher education institutions both locally and nationally. Schulze (2005) reported in her study among black academics that, contrary to Hertzberg et al.'s (1959) theory, their job satisfaction was enhanced by job context features such as having their own private offices and working flexible hours. Job dissatisfaction was caused by issues with intrinsic factors such as lack of achievement in the research field, heavy workloads and lack of contact with students. These findings partially confirm Hertzberg et al.'s (1959) theory with regard to dissatisfaction. Other causes of dissatisfaction were a shortage of funding to attend conferences, being burdened with unnecessary administrative work and meetings, poor salaries, and lack of job

security. In addition, a flawed promotion system in education is an aspect that has received recognition internationally for nearly half a century.

From the above information, it seems that the presence of certain job and environmental characteristics are necessary and contribute to job satisfaction, while their absence could lead to job dissatisfaction.

Worker characteristics are also relevant in the understanding of positive experiences of working in academia in current research. Ssesanga and Garrett (2005) maintained that age, rank and tenure significantly predicted job satisfaction in academics. Buitendach and Rothmann (2009) concurred, stating that differences exist between job satisfaction at different ages. They further added race as a contributing factor. Oshagbemi (2000) reported, however, that gender does not directly affect the job satisfaction of academics, irrespective of the fact that female academics in the higher ranks reported having more satisfaction than the males in the same job levels. This implies that gender may at least indirectly account for this apparent contradiction despite Oshagbemi's finding.

From the above information it becomes clear that there is no agreement in terms of the biographical characteristics that contribute to job satisfaction except the agreement on age, rank and tenure. It is important to take into consideration the uniqueness of each working context when describing worker characteristics in terms of the job satisfaction process.

The implications of including job satisfaction in this study. The inclusion of job satisfaction in this study will contribute to the understanding and identification of the presence of intrinsic and extrinsic factors that contribute to job satisfaction in academic roles (teaching, research, community engagement and academic citizenship) in an ODL context. Secondly, the absence of extrinsic factors that contribute to job satisfaction in academic roles

in an ODL context will also be indicated. Worker characteristics as moderating factors will assist in understanding the features that influence job satisfaction and job dissatisfaction.

Research on work engagement in academia. Various factors have been reported to have positively influenced work engagement in academia. The list includes job resources such as growth opportunities, organisational support, social support and advancement (Rothmann & Jordaan, 2006; Rothmann & Rothmann Jr, 2010). In one study, female academics reportedly invested effort in their work, even though they experienced difficulties in the fulfilment of these duties owing to decreasing resources to get the work done and the demands of faculty, students and parents (Bezuidenhout & Cilliers, 2010). Barkhuizen and Rothmann (2006) reported that academics in possession of a doctoral degree were more absorbed in their jobs than those with a four-year degree or honours. Professors were significantly more dedicated to their work than senior lecturers and more absorbed in their work than junior lecturers and senior lecturers.

Studies by Coetzee and Rothmann (2005), Jackson et al. (2006), Rothmann and Jordaan (2006) and Field and Buitendach (2011) on engagement at tertiary institutions have argued that happiness is related to engagement, that happiness is an antecedent to positive organisational outcomes and that work engagement is, in turn, an antecedent of organisational commitment.

Implications of including work engagement for this study. According to Mitonga-Monga (2015), the concepts of vigour, dedication and absorption are crucial in understanding the individual's attitude and experiences regarding work. In this research, this may help explain why some academics are more satisfied, engaged and committed to perform than others. The definition of work engagement by Schaufeli et al. (2002) implies that academics with high levels of energy and mental resilience while working (vigour), a sense of significance in their work (dedication) which is complemented by the experience of

enthusiasm, inspiration and challenges (absorption), high concentration levels and immersion in the work-related activities with difficulty detaching themselves from the work, will experience engagement in their academic roles. However, this will only happen if there are job and personal resources.

Research on meaningfulness in academia. Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) argued that individuals are not only attracted to aspects of work that provide meaningfulness but that they actively seek it in their work as a means of remaining committed to the organisation. There is limited knowledge of the impact of meaningful work on all aspects of organisational functioning (Geldenhuys, Raba, & Venter, 2014). However, the inclusion of this construct will assist in uncovering what contributes to meaningful academic work roles and its relationship to other constructs.

The implication of including meaningfulness for this study. It is notable that happiness is likened to meaningfulness (Seligman, 2002b). In the view of Seligman (2002b), Peterson et al. (2005) and De Beers (2007), meaning is a necessary requirement for happiness. If academics experience their work roles (teaching, research, community engagement and academic citizenship) as meaningful, it is likely to result in positive experiences. This is because psychological meaningfulness reflects a sense of purpose or personal connection to work (Spreitzer, 1995). Furthermore, meaningfulness is associated with and has been confirmed to predict work engagement (Nelson & Simmons, 2003; Peterson et al., 2005). It is expected that individuals with a calling orientation to work will experience more meaning in their work than those with job or career orientations (van Zyl et al., 2010). If academics do not experience meaningfulness in their work roles, this will likely lead to negative experiences. The inclusion of meaningfulness in this research will contribute to the general understanding of different academic activities that are regarded as meaningful by different academics.

Research on flow in academia. B. Martin (2011) argued that conducting research is an ideal activity for entering flow. This is because advanced skills are required and intense concentration is needed, for example, when making sense of data, understanding theory and planning a research project. Other research aspects such as reading a research paper and relating it to one's own ideas may require considerable mental effort. Another reason flow is perceived to be easier with research than teaching or administration is that most scholars spend years developing advanced research skills through studying as an undergraduate and as a research student, but relatively little time developing skills as teachers and administrators. The greater the skill level in any endeavour, the greater the potential satisfaction from exercising that skill at an advanced level. In addition, teaching and administrative tasks including email, the web and mobile phones, have increased the number of potential interruptions and distractions which makes it difficult to maintain flow (B. Martin, 2011).

Lemmer (2015) conducted research by collecting data from a purposive sample of 14 researchers (six men and eight women) at a South African university. All the participants had been active in academia for more than 20 years and were categorised as *proven* researchers by the institution on the basis of a stipulated number of research outputs. Furthermore, all the participants were married and were over 50 years of age. Six participants also held research ratings from the National Research Foundation. The findings indicated that flow, as defined by Csikszentmihalyi (1990) and described by Neumann's (2006) first, second and third stages of passionate thought (peak emotion, absorption and sensation), was discernible in participants' accounts of doing research. During these experiences, time and self-interest were suspended in the joy of the creative moment and participants recognised this as the spur to further research activity. Two participants, however, also identified a darker side of flow—its potential to take over other legitimate activities and to dominate normal life.

Lemmer's (2015) research displayed the relationship between flow and passion as a contributing towards high research production.

The implications of including flow for this study. Csikszentmihalyi (1992, 1995, 1997) indicated that there are a number of measurable effects of the flow experience. These include creativity, talent development, productivity, stress reduction and improved self-esteem. As a result, flow contributes to optimal experience (Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2002). According to Warr (2002a), the frequency and intensity of positive states during the experience of flow are likely to influence more extended feelings of well-being. This results in the experience of flow and subjective well-being becoming interdependent over time.

In this study, the positive experiences of flow should therefore occur when the challenges of academic roles are matched by equivalent skills. This is likely to happen when the academic tasks, namely, teaching, research, academic citizenship and community engagement, have clear goals, entail something that can be completed and include the provision of feedback. Individuals should also have control over their actions for flow to be experienced (De Beers, 2007). Too much skill in relation to the challenge at hand would lead to boredom, while too little skill would cause anxiety.

The Significance of these Constructs for Conceptualising Positive Experiences of Working in Academia

The research discussed above implies that an academic who is experiencing in the present the different constructs—job satisfaction, meaningfulness, flow and engagement—is assumed to be generally happy. This is because a happy worker is expected to experience a range of psychological states at work such as positive emotions, positive mood and work related flow, work engagement and job satisfaction as indicated above. Engagement allows

the person to display or approach work with a positive attitude by demonstrating vigour, dedication and absorption (S. E. Coetzee & Rothmann, 2005; Field & Buitendach , 2011; Jackson et al., 2006; Rothmann & Jordaan, 2006). Furthermore, the experience of engagement is influenced by the state of flow which occurs when an individual experiences the optimal combination between skills and challenges (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975; Moneta & Csikszentmihalyi, 1996; Warr, 2002a). Through the meaning-making process, individuals are able to enjoy their work further (Peterson et al., 2005; Seligman, 2002a). All these constructs become fulfilled when the environment is conducive for academics to experience job satisfaction, which allows intrinsic and extrinsic factors that are necessary to experience positive experiences in academia (Bakker & Daniels, 2013; Field & Buitendach, 2011; Seligman, 2002a). It is therefore assumed in this research that academics in such an environment will be exposed to more positive experiences of their academic roles than negative experiences.

The conceptual model of positive experiences of working in academia is presented in Figure 9. This model will help describe holistically academics that are experiencing positive work experiences in an ODL context. Since this model is holistic it therefore requires focusing on the different key performance areas (KPAs) and different positive psychology constructs from past and present and how they are interrelated.

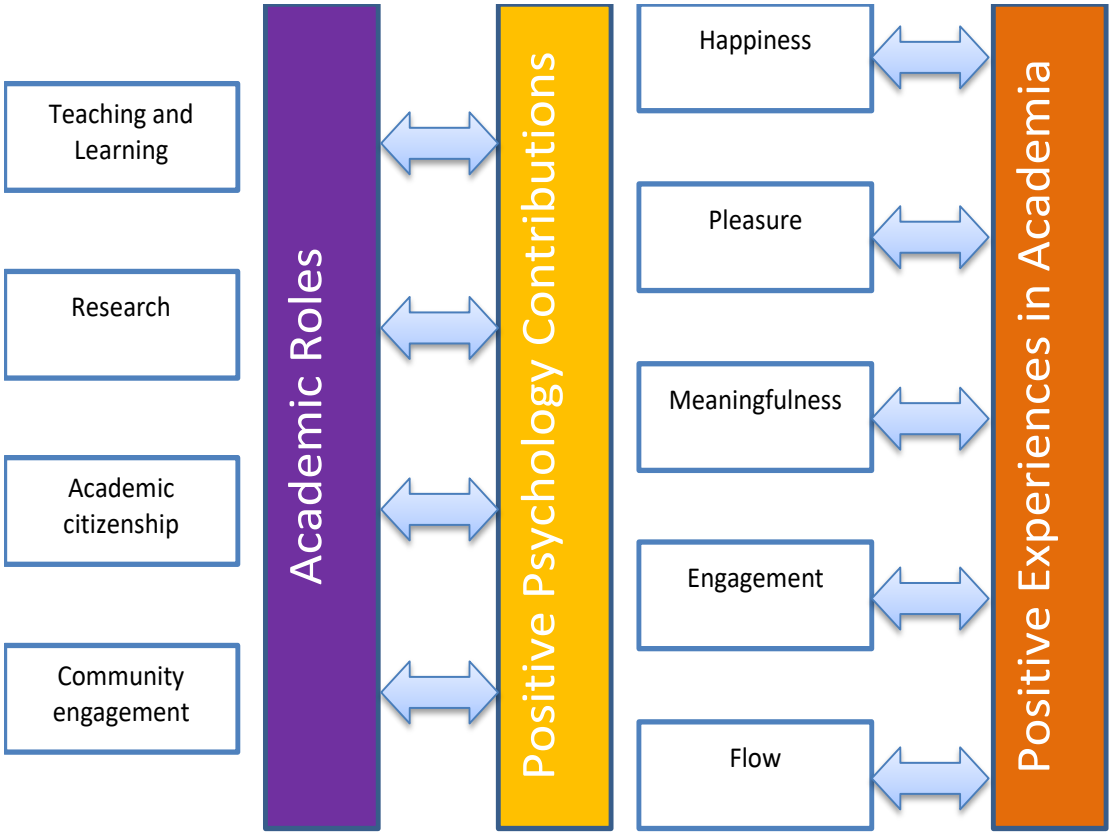

Figure 9. Theoretical model of positive experiences of working in academia

Conclusion

Chapter 3 highlighted Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi's (2000) definition of positive psychology which is adopted to conceptualise positive experiences of work in general and, specifically, positive experiences of academic work. In line with their definition of positive psychology, the following constructs from the past (subjective well-being, happiness, flow and optimism) together with the psychosocial characteristics and the STD theory of motivation were applied to define the general process of positive experiences. Warr's (2002a) model of SWB was adopted to conceptualise positive experiences of work by utilising the concepts of job satisfaction and engagement. Further constructs (happiness, meaningfulness and flow) were utilised to complement Warr's model of SWB. These constructs were regarded as contributing to a description of a happy academic. Lastly, as a

contribution of this study, a theoretical model of working in academia was offered. Chapter 4 provides the research approach of the research.

Research Approach

Introduction

This chapter introduces the research approach firstly by describing the interpretative paradigm, and then by providing a justification for the use of a qualitative methodology in this study. The qualitative methodology will be outlined to explain how it was applied to answer the research question. The discussion on the qualitative methodology focuses on case study research, purposive sampling, interviews as an instrument for collecting data and interpretive data analysis.

Research Approach

As indicated in Chapter 1, an interpretive paradigm was adopted as part of the research design in order to try and understand the positive experiences of working in academia. The interpretive paradigm is sometimes loosely referred to as the phenomenological approach (Babbie & Mouton, 2010) and it aims at understanding the meanings people attach to facts (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2006). The interpretive paradigm is also related to hermeneutics, a theory of meaning that originated in the 19th century (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). In order to create an understanding of the interpretative paradigm, appropriate definitions need to be created. Accordingly, the specific definition of the interpretative paradigm that has been adopted in this research is given below.

Description of the interpretive paradigm. Babbie and Mouton (2010) believed that an interpretive approach is the opposite of positivism because it focuses on understanding human behaviour instead of predicting it. An interpretive approach emphasises meaning-creation as related to human behaviour and human action.

This study adopts Terre Blanche, Kelly and Durrheim's (2006) comprehensive definition of the interpretive paradigm as follows:

> Taking people's subjective experiences seriously as the essence of what is real for them (ontology), making sense of people's experiences by interacting with them and listening carefully to what they tell us (epistemology) and making use of qualitative research techniques to collect and analyse information (methodology) (p. 274).

This definition emphasises the harnessing and extension of the power of ordinary language and expression to understand the social world we live in (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). The definition takes into account the core characteristics of a research method. It starts by acknowledging ontological issues which addresses the nature of reality, and thereafter looks at issues of epistemology which concentrate on how we know what we know and which are regarded as the basis of knowledge systems. It is in line with this definition that Pascale (2011) argued that profound issues of research paradigms provide frameworks for recognising what we see, as well as for understanding the relevance and importance of what we see.

An interpretive paradigm is therefore deemed relevant for this research because it requires what Giorgi (1985) refers to as the practice of science within a "context of discovery" rather than in a "context of verification". A context of discovery implies a process in terms of which meaning is discovered, which is in line with Terre Blanche et al.'s description of the interpretive paradigm above.

In addition, Denzin and Smith (2008) have indicated that research which adopts an interpretive paradigm allows for representations that include case studies, documents, critical personal experiences, narratives, life stories, field notes, interviews, conversations,

photographs, recordings and memos to the self. Such representations are achieved by adopting a qualitative and/or critical indigenous stance on gaining access to research subjects, methods of collecting and analysing information in order to identify emerging themes and subsequently to make meaningful sense of them.

Marrying Positive Psychology with a Qualitative Approach

As may be noted from the preceding discussion, a qualitative approach is used in this study because, firstly, this approach is embraced by the interpretive paradigm which is adopted as the research paradigm. A qualitative approach is therefore deemed suitable for this research as it is believed it would facilitate answering the research question: What are the qualitative positive experiences of working in academic institutions in an ODL context, the individual characteristics and the enabling factors that make academics experience their work positively?

In Denzin and Lincoln's (2005) view, there seems to be no single definition for a qualitative approach due to the fact that qualitative research is an interdisciplinary, transdisciplinary and sometimes counter-disciplinary field that cuts across the humanities and the social sciences with its multi-paradigmatic focus. As a result, it is difficult to come up with one common definition. Yin (2011), however, cautioned that, while a brief definition of qualitative research will come across as excluding some relevant disciplines in the humanities and the social sciences, a broad definition will seem too general. Yin's comments imply that researchers should either come up with a balanced definition that accommodates all the different fields or one that is applicable to the specific field in which the research is being carried out–such as psychology in this case. This research therefore espouses the description of qualitative research offered by Denzin and Lincoln (2011), who defined it as "an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world" (p. 3). This definition will be integrated

practically with the key features of qualitative research according to Durrheim (2006), which include conducting research in its natural setting by being open to whatever emerges, focusing on more complex interdependencies by not reducing the question to a few variables, and immersing in the details and specifics of the data to discover important categories, dimensions and interrelationships.

Additionally, a qualitative approach helped to address some of the limitations that result from the adoption of a positive psychology paradigm. Pandey (2011) argued that positive psychology falls within a positivistic paradigm, which is deterministic in nature, with behaviour consequently being viewed in terms of positive and negative, as two extreme ends of the same continuum. This is regarded as a linear way of understanding behaviour which disregards the cultural variations found in the different people of the world (Lazarus, 2003b). According to this author, in places such as Asia and Africa, positive and negative are regarded as two sides of the same coin and are not viewed as being disconnected.

In escalating the criticism of positive psychology, Lazarus (2003b, 2003a) condemned positive psychology as failing to identify any new research methodology which can assist in understanding psychology better. This author claims that, like conventional psychology, positive psychology tends to overgeneralise when attempts are made to obtain an understanding of people by approaching research in a reductionist objective manner (quantitatively). This therefore implies the negation of alternative approaches that are subjective and are regarded by *western* psychology as non-scientific (Pandey, 2011).

In this research, a qualitative approach is deemed as useful starting point for researching questions about experiences and lived realities (Mason, 2006). This is because a qualitative approach takes into consideration the context, history and politics within which academics in an ODL institution function, as described in Chapter 2. Such an approach also assists in understanding and describing in detail the positive experiences of working in

academia. Such positive experiences were revealed when the researcher interacted directly with academics, using language to understand the knowledge as experienced and related by them. In view of the fact that one of the key features of qualitative research is not to generalise but to identify emerging themes (Durrheim, 2010), the identification and understanding of emerging themes took place throughout the application of the case study method as described below.

Case study method. A case study approach allows for an in-depth study of a particular or specific behaviour. It can therefore be defined as an examination of "a phenomenon in its natural setting, employing multiple methods of data collection to gather information from one or a few entities (people, groups or organisations)" (Benbasat, Goldstein, & Mead, 1987, p. 370). Yin (2004) emphasised that case studies allow researchers to address the *how* and *why* questions about real-life events.

Selection of research participants. The research participants for this study were selected purposively. According to Teddlie and Yu (2007), purposive sampling techniques are used predominantly in qualitative studies to select units such as individuals, for example the academics in this research. The academics were selected because they were the focus of the research and were therefore deemed to be suitable for answering the research question: What are the positive experiences of working in academic institutions in an ODL context, the individual characteristics and the enabling factors that make academics experience their work positively? In line with Denzin and Lincoln's (2005) view, participants were selected according to their willingness to share their positive experiences as opposed to opting for representative cases. This means that the issue of 'depth' took precedence over the number of cases selected.

The interview participants were identified by requesting academics in various departments to nominate colleagues in their department who they thought were enjoying any

one of the key performance areas of being an academic (teaching, research and academic citizenship). Those academics were in turn requested to identify other people who they thought I should talk to. The recommended academics were subsequently contacted for possible inclusion in the study. These are considered as typical cases, not critical cases (Collins, Onwuegbuzie, & Jiao, 2006). Collins et al. (2006) regarded typical cases as those participants who are considered average in terms of the specific phenomenon or characteristic being researched. Critical cases are considered when a researcher chooses a setting, groups or individuals based on limited characteristics.

Once possible participants had been identified, their contact details, including phone numbers, e-mail address and physical office location, were obtained from the institution's list of internal contact details. The participants were recruited during a face-to-face meeting, or by means of e-mail and telephone conversations, in order to build rapport with the participants. During this stage, the researcher explained the research process as described in the interview brief which is attached as Appendix B**.**

Interviewing as an instrument for collecting data. In-depth face-to-face interviews were used to gather information about the positive experiences of working in academia. In this type of interview, the individual interviewee is regarded as having unique and important knowledge about the social world of which they are a part and they are therefore considered *experts*. This use of experts allows access to information and provides a better understanding through a process in which the participant and the interviewer engage in a meaning-making conversation (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009) referred to this type of interview as an informal conversational interview. In this type of interview, questions emerge from the immediate context and are asked in the natural course of things; there is no predetermination of question topics or wording (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009).

Interview process. The interview process followed with the participants entailed one-on-one sessions conducted at different times and in different venues. Interviews were conducted only with those academic candidates who had shown an interest in participating in the study.

Planning for the interviews. Since the type of interview adopted in this study was the unstructured in-depth interview, no interview schedule was prepared prior to the interviewing process. However, when conducting the interviews, I kept the aim of the research in the forefront of my mind. As recommended by Kelly (2010), interviews were practised by role-playing with two intern colleagues. From this process, I received feedback on how the intern interviewees experienced the research process and possible areas for improvement were identified; for example, it was recommended that I speak more slowly and in a more relaxed manner.

Physical context. Most of the interviews were conducted in the participants' offices to allow them to be in their natural working environment. There were, however, instances when participants requested to be interviewed in my office, for example, if they were coming from another campus or were away on research and development leave and/or working from home and therefore did not have permanent offices allocated to them. Some of the academics who opted to be interviewed in my office indicated that they were often interrupted in their offices by both students and colleagues and therefore preferred a neutral interview area.

Personal in-depth interview sessions. Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2011) emphasised building rapport as being essential in the early stage of the interview process. I accomplished this by first creating a safe, comfortable atmosphere for the respondents by engaging in an informal conversation which included greeting them, and then asking how they were doing on that particular day, thanking them for agreeing to participate in the study, checking if they understood the interview brief, elaborating on the aim of the study and answering any

questions and concerns that they might have. During this phase, participants were reminded about the fact that the conversation would be recorded, their right to withdraw at any point and the confidentiality issue, even though these issues had already been communicated to the participants in the interview brief which had been sent electronically or discussed personally with the participant prior to the face-to-face interview. An interview brief is attached as Appendix B for more information on the concerns raised.

To start the interview, I asked some general questions, including "Tell me about your academic career so far" and "Tell me about a typical day's work for you". Some of the other guiding questions included the following

- What is it that you like about your work?
- What excites you about your work or makes you enjoy it?
- What is your ideal working scenario?
- Is there anything else you would like to share before we close the interview session?

Research Context

The research was carried out at the University of South Africa (also known as Unisa), an institution of higher learning, and more specifically, an institution for Open Distance Learning (ODL). A detailed description of the research context, as well as the characteristics of a higher learning institution, a university and ODL, is given in Chapter 2.

The Role of a Researcher

My main role was to identify the positive experiences of working in academia. In line with this role, and as Babbie and Mouton (2010) have acknowledged, in qualitative research, the researcher is regarded as the primary instrument for data collection and analysis. As already discussed, the researcher's subjective experiences form part of the overall research process and should be acknowledged as such. In line with this role, I tried to remain aware throughout of the extent to which my views could affect the research process and thus tried to handle any bias that might occur by exercising, among other skills, empathy, reflexivity and critical thinking.

I also acknowledged my role by reflecting briefly on my personal experiences when inviting the academics to participate in the study, during the interview process and during the data analysis process. Below is a brief summary of my academic career.

My first job was in academia. I joined Unisa in 2000 where I was employed as a junior lecturer in the Department of Psychology. I was immediately promoted to a lecturer after completing my masters' thesis and graduating from the University of Pretoria in 2003. Among other positive things of working in academia, I appreciated working with a group of older generation academics who had a vast amount of experience and knowledge of working in academia and of the discipline of psychology. As a young academic and later mother of two children, I enjoyed the flexible working hours which allowed me to plan around my children's activities. I also enjoyed the academic travelling which afforded me the opportunity to present conference papers nationally and internationally, and attending institutional seminars about different topics by relevant experts.

While I enjoyed working in academia, there were also activities that I did not enjoy. I really struggled with marking scripts whether they were for assignments or exams. My

experience of marking was unfulfilling. I think this was influenced by those students that did not put much effort in their work. I also experienced challenges with parents of first year students who would phone on behalf of their children and making unreasonable demands without empowering those students. The fact that I was involved in a lot of modules meant more work and not having sufficient time to work on my own PhD studies. The fact that I could not complete my PhD studies meant no promotion opportunity and therefore limited academic growth. Irrespective of the lack of time to work on my studies, there was constant pressure from the university to complete my studies. As a result, my studying journey felt meaningless. I felt like I was expected to finish an end product that did not *talk* to me but was required for the sake of finishing. I resigned from Unisa in 2014 to join the public sector as a Research Psychologist and to work within the field of applied psychology.

Reflections during the recruitment of academics to participate in the study. The process of inviting academics to participate in the study was particularly challenging. At the beginning of the invitation process, some academics who were approached declined the invitation. For example, one potential candidate, when asked to participate in the study, said she was an introvert, had had many bad experiences and would prefer not to share them with anybody.

It became clear to me that some potential participants had in fact had more negative than positive experiences, and that people have different interpersonal styles that would require a flexible approach when interacting with possible participants, for example negotiating and accommodating participants in terms of their preferred way of relating their experiences.

I certainly did feel a minor feeling of rejection as if my motives were not trusted and I had been denied an opportunity to include diverse experiences (both negative and positive) in my study. I therefore had to rethink how I would invite potential participants from then on

and how I would deal with those who wanted to distance themselves from the research process. The intention in rethinking my approach was not to plan a standard approach but rather to approach the potential participants in a more flexible and open-minded way.

This intention was reinforced when another potential respondent said she did not like the recording aspect of the interview because she did not know who would access her voice. This again left me feeling mistrusted. In view of the fact that the research context was academia where research is conducted on a daily basis, I had assumed that academics would be willing to participate in my study. I nevertheless decided not to use a tape recorder in this case.

Another colleague asked for more time to think about whether to participate in the study or not; however, he eventually indicated that he would prefer not to participate in the research because he did not believe that he could make a contribution. He explained that there were so many negative things that had happened in his academic life in the recent past, that he was full of negativity and even thinking of resigning.

These kinds of reactions starkly highlight the challenging academic context which could make it difficult for academics to enjoy their work and also limit their positive experiences. Not only established academics who may have become embittered over the years declined participation. One potential participant, who had been in the university for only a year, was adamant that not all her experiences were positive and that she therefore did not fit the sample.

There were also some less overt refusals to participate, such as a colleague who requested me to e-mail her the interview brief but then failed to respond to my e-mail, and to a follow-up email. I decided not to pursue the matter further and left it there.

In all, about six potential participants declined, in one way or another, to participate. At this point, I was feeling particularly frustrated and spoke to my promoter who reminded me of the significance of building rapport by spending more time with my prospective participants and explaining the aim of my study in more detail. Our sense was that potential participants' negative feelings about the university were more salient to them than their positive ones, and that they resisted being singled out as examples of people who felt positive about an academic environment that was generally perceived to be a hostile.

Lessons learnt. The experiences discussed in the previous section serve to indicate the challenges involved in recruiting academics to participate in a study on positive experiences of working in academia. Although the connotations attached to these candidates' responses were negative, they nevertheless contributed positively to my study as they helped me to understand the behaviour of academics and to become open in the process of recruiting academics for a positive psychology study. Consequently, one of my main assumptions was that, perhaps emphasising the positives in a research study could in itself be anxiety provoking because the researcher is somehow communicating that people should shift their focus to positive experiences. Accordingly, the following lessons were learnt from the recruitment process:

1) Perfect imperfections. The first lesson learnt here was that the intention of my communication was clearly contradictory in the way it was received by the candidates (the impact of the message). As a result, from then on my approach changed and I subsequently allowed participants to tell me their story as they experienced it, thus emphasising the negative before the positive, the positive before the negative, or a mixture of the positive and the negative.
2) Holding on longer. As part of the recruitment journey, I had time to reflect on how to engage effectively with prospective participants. This was done by

spending more time building rapport with prospective participants and explaining in more detail the aim of the research. However, in spite of the approach I adopted of being open when recruiting participants, there were still those who were not interested in participating. I learnt to accept that and to move on with the academics who were available and who were interested in participating in the study. I was further sensitised to the following:

a. *The possible impact of my role as an African researcher*. One of the issues I had to confront was how my colleagues – African, white and Coloured – experienced my role as a researcher.

b. *The possible impact of my role as a black **female** researcher*. This was interesting, since most of the academics who initially agreed to participate were the males who were approached rather than the females.

c. *The understanding and perception of psychology as a profession in an academic context*. The fact that as a researcher I was based in the Psychology Department made me question the perception that participants had of psychology. Did they have negative perceptions about the field of psychology? Were they falling for the myth that I could read their minds?

d. *Internal versus external research consultant*. This point refers to the impact I might have had on participants as an insider in the academic community. The question to be asked here is: Which is more suitable, an internal research consultant or an external research consultant? Or perhaps aspects of both? The assumption is that participants might have experienced me differently if I had been an external researcher. Whether a researcher is an insider or an outsider has implications for the interaction between the researcher and the participants, which may be both positive and negative.

> The fact that I was myself a member of the academic community helped me to understand fully the everyday world of the participants because their world was also my world

In the end, I made appointments with those who agreed to participate in the study in order to engage with them further in face-to-face interviews. Like the recruitment process recounted above, my subjective experiences of the interview process which formed part of the research are shared below.

There is no easy walk to freedom: My experiences during the interviewing phase. The process of collecting data was not smooth sailing. I approached this stage of the research with mixed feelings of excitement and fear of the unknown. The interview journey was characterised by the intermittent unavailability of the research participants owing to their absence attending conferences and workshops both nationally and internationally, meeting deadlines for the marking of assignments and examinations, as well as relocation and vacation leave. Therefore, in order to accommodate them I had to be flexible, as they were busy fulfilling the various duties expected of their academic role. Initially, I collected data mainly from the male academic participants, who made the time to be interviewed. After reflecting on this, however, I realised that the sampled participants were not a true reflection of the diversity of the academic community nor, consequently, the positive experiences of working in academia. I thus made further efforts to include females with different biographical characteristics.

One of the disadvantages of conducting interviews is that it has the potential to allow the interviewer to influence the responses of the interviewee (Terre Blanche et al., 2010). This can happen in many ways such as when the interviewer uses leading questions, interrupts interviewees by finishing their sentences or interprets what is being said. Hesse-

Biber and Leavy (2011) gave the following tips to engage with the participants and these were applied during the unstructured in-depth interviews:

- *Interviewee focused*. Both verbal and nonverbal communication was used to signal that I was listening and understanding respondents. I took notes as the participants were relating stories of their positive experiences of working in academia and also observed their nonverbal behaviour.
- *Non interruptive*. The respondents were allowed sufficient time to think and speak on the topic under discussion. This was done by allowing silence during conversations and I also tried to avoid interrupting respondents. In most interviews I acknowledged participants by nodding and murmuring encouragement.
- *Being open and non-judgemental*. From the recruiting process, I had learnt to create a safe space in which participants could tell their story from their own point of view. As the researcher, I consequently did not share my opinions but rather allowed participants to express themselves freely. This freedom to express themselves was illustrated by some use of swear words and metaphorical language, the sharing of names and, sometimes, the use of their mother tongue.
- *Accepting of differences*. A non-judgemental stance was adopted throughout the interview sessions and negative comments were avoided. This was complemented non-verbally by showing interest in what the respondents were saying.
- *Not making assumptions.* Interest was maintained throughout and I avoided speaking in behalf of respondent on topics that I was familiar with or passionate about. I used probing to check and unpack what was being said by participants.

As was mentioned in the discussion of the physical context of the research, most of the interviewing process happened in the participants' offices with only a few participants being interviewed in my office. When collecting information in the participant's offices, I felt very welcome. In most instances, the participants told me that they had put aside time for the interview and that they were comfortable with my recording our conversation. Since I was aware of the possible negative impact of using a tape recorder, I was prepared to conduct the interviews without it if requested to do so by the participants. Conducting interviews in the participants' offices allowed me to observe and experience the physical environment that facilitated positive experiences of working in academia. During the interview process, there were often interruptions from students, colleagues requesting assistance or dropping off examination or assignment scripts, and telephone calls from colleagues or students enquiring about results or making appointments to see the lecturer. I had allowed for these interactions to occur as it was part of the academic everyday work experience. The offices of these academics were both organised and disorganised, with interesting information on the walls in the form of posters, accolades, certificates, family photos and photos of academics in celebratory mood at graduations or receiving awards. There were also piles of marked and unmarked scripts and assignments, art work and so forth, in every office.

Some of the participants expressed empathy and motivation in terms of my role as a PhD student and, in general, I enjoyed interacting with them. The feelings I experienced when being with the participants varied. In the presence of senior professors who I regarded as experts in their field, I felt intimidated because I thought they would interrogate my study. Other participants gave me the impression of hurrying the interview sessions along, blaming this on a lack of time. In such instances, I also felt pressurised and anxious to complete the interview. This resulted in some interviews being less than 15 minutes in duration compared to the longest one which went on for over an hour. However, I appreciated all the

opportunities afforded me and experienced meaningful and fulfilling interactions with the various participants. I learnt much from my participants – positive, negative and contradictory – about the positive experiences of working in an ODL context.

Managing interview materials: Transcribing. For ethical reasons, permission was obtained from the participants in the form of signed consent to record the interview. The interview sessions were then recorded and transcribed into text. Painter (2012) noted that transcription refers to taking that which is not in writing and making it into written text. Unwritten text includes all communicative practices in the form of nonverbal behaviour such as sound and gestures. Transcription in a qualitative context implies that we do not think about the meaning of the texts in isolation but also attempt to visualise what we are writing (Painter, 2012). In this way, according to Davidson (2009), transcription is regarded as interpretative because it represents the views the participants expressed and also tries to interpret their nonverbal cues. Transcripts are not transparent and therefore force us to think, and in that way open up the analytic mode. The four functions of transcription are as follows (Painter, 2012):

1) *To represent data in the way that the researcher wants it* so as to be part of the research process. This means that transcription makes it possible to engage with data, to take that which has been spoken (audio) and transfer it into written text; in other words, to make meaning of written words as part of answering the research question.

6. *To assist in making it possible to analyse data*. Using the transcription notes, I was able to conduct a thematic analysis by looking closely at the data for emerging patterns and the connection between them.

7. *To disseminate*. In this thesis, transcription was used to assist in sharing the results of the research.

8. *Verify the analysis or conclusions*. This involved checking the information obtained against the research question and thereafter drawing conclusions.

Data Analysis

In qualitative research, data analysis is not a once-off event that occurs only at the end. In my study, the process began when I started to collect data during the interviewing process and was finalised during the data analysis stage. Since the interpretive paradigm has many different qualitative data analysis approaches (i.e., phenomenology, grounded theory, thematic and content analytic),Terre Blanche et al. (2010) recommended that, irrespective of the approach one adopts, a good interpretive analysis should stay close to the data and interpret it from an empathetic position. This means having the intent to understand how it might feel to experience the positive experiences of working in academia from the perspective of the academics involved in that world.

In this research, data was analysed by combining the four stages of phenomenological data analysis (Giorgi, 1989), the five phases of interpretative data analysis (Terre Blanche et al., 2010) and the phases of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The reason for this integration was to allow for a flexible and elaborative process, since all these approaches are somewhat interrelated because they originate within the interpretative data analysis approach. Therefore, the following integrative phases were undertaken:

1) The aim of the first phase, familiarisation with the data, is to gain an understanding of the whole because all parts of the protocol used to analyse the data are related to each other (Giorgi, 1989). As a researcher, I managed to familiarise myself with the data and immerse myself in it by reading through the transcripts many times, drawings diagrams and brain storming (Terre Blanche et

al., 2010). As pointed out earlier, in a qualitative study data analysis is not an event but a process, with some themes already having been identified during the interview and the transcription process. As a result of these processes and the focus in this current phase, I was able to loosely identify some of the emerging themes even though they were not finalised (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

2) According to Terre Blanche et al. (2010), the second phase involves inducing themes. This process involved breaking the story into parts and is also referred to as the creation of *meaning units*. Braun and Clarke (2006) also emphasised the development of codes during this phase. In this phase, I also generated both general and specific categories by using the language as used by the participants in the data, and some of the themes already identified loosely in the first phase were confirmed. At the time, I worked on the hard copies of the printed transcripts, using different coloured marker pens to classify themes into categories. I then cut them up and placed them in separate envelopes according to the specific themes.

   This process identified the metaphors used by the participants, using the words that implied the metaphors as possible themes to be included in the research. Metaphors are the result of a process by which the literal meaning of a phrase or word is applied to new content in a figurative sense. They therefore enable the transfer of information about a relatively familiar subject to a new and relatively unknown one. Metaphors therefore act as generators of new meaning (Grant, 2001).

   More themes were identified by applying the following techniques (G. W. Ryan & Bernard, 2003).

a. Shuttling back and forth – this implies identifying and focusing on the different themes or topics in the data.

b. Following on from the previous process, I had an option to analyse my data by either being superficial or over-interpreting/speculating wildly (personal communication, 16 May, 2018 (personal conversation, Terre Blanche, 15 June 2015). The former implies summarising what was said by the participant, which amounts to repetition, while the latter, which I opted for, entails more of a second-order process, over-interpreting or wildly speculating (as a provisional analytic tactic) by identifying repeated words or phrases; that is, using rich metaphoric language that encourages all the contradictions. This was then followed by selectively abandoning the interpretations that appeared on second thoughts to be too outlandish and poorly supported by the data.

c. This was followed by working with the tension of walking through the data like a pedestrian versus flying over it like an aeroplane. I tried to apply both options, shuttling back and forth between very detail-oriented analysis and more of a bird's eye view.

d. Another tension that I tried to work with in my analysis was that between concreate and abstract categories. I started by avoiding overly general and abstract ways of labelling features of the transcripts, rather focusing on the concrete specifics that seemed to be characterise this particular set of transcripts. Only once I had explored this, did I start to consider wider, more abstract thematic categories. (Terre Blanche, personal communication, 2015). This is illustrated in Figure 10.

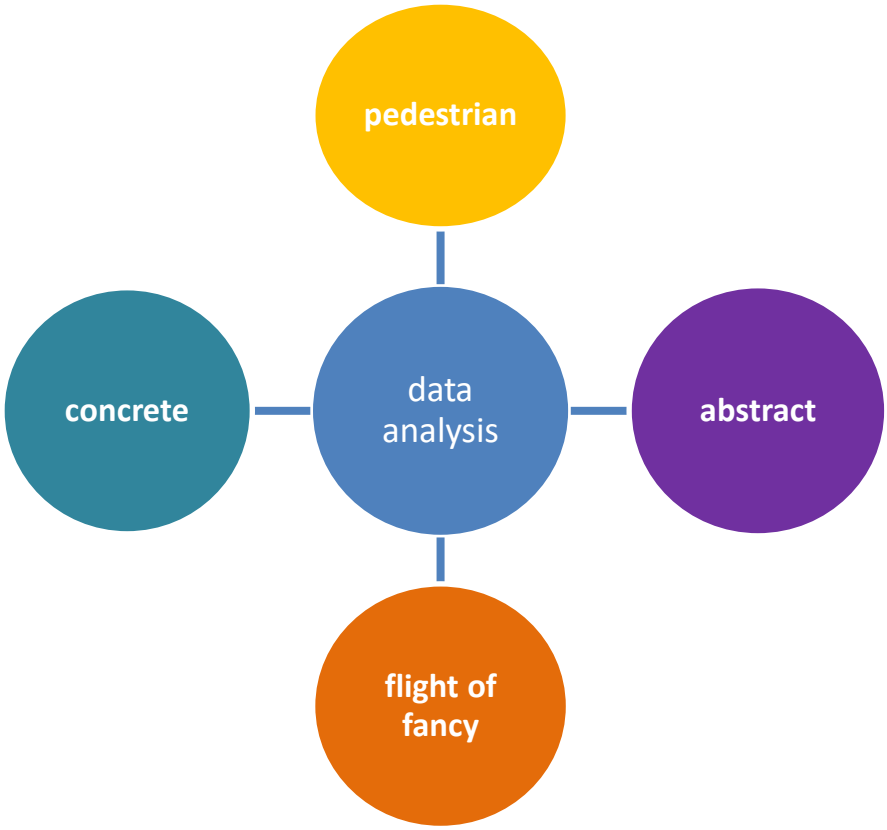

Figure 10. Theme identification technique (G. W. Ryan & Bernard, 2003)

9. During the third phase, the coding process which had already started in the previous phase was completed. Phrases, lines, sentences and paragraphs were coded, as well as any text that contained material pertaining to the identified themes. Each code was considered in terms of its meaning and its relation to the other themes.

10. This phase of data analysis involved refining the themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). During this fourth phase, I broke the linear, chronological order of identifying themes and coding by mixing the themes from the envelopes that contained specific identified themes. This procedure allowed me to check whether certain text that belonged together had been put into the same envelope and to identify that which did not belong together. Accordingly, new sub-themes were identified from the already existing themes. According to Terre Blanche and Kelly (1999,

p. 144), “the purpose of this step is to capture new, finer nuances of meaning not captured by your original, possibly quite crude, coding system”.

11. Phase five of the analysis involved the interpretation of data. This phase was written up like a report with the categories being used as subheadings and a few alterations and expansions being added to some of the discussions of the different categories. This phase is expanded on in Chapter 5, which contains the presentation and the discussion of the results.

Ethical Considerations and their Implications

Permission to conduct the study was granted by the Department of Psychology in the form of an ethical clearance certificate. This is attached as Appendix A.

In order to capture the conversations held with the participants, I requested permission to use a tape recorder. The purpose of recording was to assist in obtaining an understanding the experiences of the participants as expressed in their own words. In line with ethical imperatives of the Health Professional Council of South Africa (HPCSA), and in view of the fact that the researcher is a research psychologist registered with the HPCSA, it was crucial to protect the image and integrity of the participants.

The following ethical principles were held prominently in the research to ensure that the participants’ dignity and rights were protected:

Voluntary participation and informed consent. Participation in the study was voluntary and no one was forced to take part. During the recruitment and data collection phase, the purpose of the interviews, the recording of data and the aim of the study were explained to the participants in person (see Appendix B). They were also requested to sign a consent form (see Appendix C). The following was communicated to the participants prior to

the data collection process: (a) that they had a right to withdraw from participation in the study at any time; and (b) that, should they be interested in the research findings, I would make them available to them.

Right to privacy and confidentiality. The right to privacy and confidentiality was communicated to all participants. All information and data provided by the participants was treated with respect and confidentiality, which implied that no one except myself and my supervisor had access to the data. Pseudonyms were used to protect the participants' identity and to ensure their privacy.

Results

Introduction

The focus of this chapter is on the presentation, discussion and integration of results with relevant literature reviewed in Chapters 2 and 3. Prior to describing the themes that emerged from the interviews with the participants, a brief description and discussion of the participants will be given. Towards the end of the chapter, a refined integrated model of positive experiences of working in academia will be presented.

Background of the Participants

A total of 12 academics participated in the study. To enable deeper understanding and meaning-making, each participant was understood within the context of his or her college of origin, level of employment, gender and race. In terms of gender composition there were seven male and five female participants. The different levels of academic employment included five Lecturers, one Senior Lecturer, four Associate Professors and one Full Professor. The participants included in this research are reflective of the different levels of academic employment found in higher learning institutions in South Africa, with the exception of more junior ranks such as Junior Lecturers and postgraduate assistants. The most represented colleges in the study were Humanities, followed by Economic and Management Sciences and, lastly, Science and Technology. There are other colleges that are not represented in this study. This, however, is not considered to be a drawback because the participants were selected purposefully according to their willingness and availability to participate in the study.

The longest serving academic participant had been employed by the University for 22 years while the shortest serving participant indicated that he had been working full time for the University for only 1 year and 8 months. Some of the participants had worked in other higher learning institutions before joining Unisa or as researchers in the public sector. A few of the younger participants indicated that they started working at Unisa directly upon completion of their postgraduate studies. This reflects the shift of universities from employing people with highly specialised skills, which they acquire over a certain period of time, to replacing them with young, mostly black, academics recruited as postgraduate students (Portnoi, 2003). There was one white female participant who mentioned that she joined Unisa, left for another university and then came back to rejoin Unisa. Her main reason for returning to Unisa was that the university where she was working was not transformed compared to Unisa. Her reason is in line with Mapesela and Hay's (2005) hypothesis that the impact of the Employment Equity Act would be experienced differently by old and new academics. The visionary traditional academics might perceive diversity as necessary and beneficial to higher education, and thus would be happy about the Act. This is however contradictory to the conservative traditional academic staff who might receive this Act with scepticism and hostility.

Two other participants had initially worked at Vista University prior to the merger between Technikon South Africa, Unisa and Vista University. A few of the participants were in private practice prior to joining Unisa and, during that time, they were working for Unisa as tutors or external markers. This suggests that the majority of participants had considerable exposure of working in academia, and specifically in an ODL context where they were involved in certain roles of an academic nature.

Metaphors: Expression of Positive Experiences of Working in Academia

As indicated in the previous chapter, context is crucial in a qualitative study for understanding the behaviour of research participants and for creating meaning. In this study, one of the ways in which context was mapped out was by communicating to the participants the aim of the study, which was to understand positive experiences of working in academia. It is assumed that the title of the research - positive experiences of working in academia: reflections on a higher learning institution - had a positive connotation attached to it which could have influenced how participants responded or not responded to the interviews.

Interestingly, most of the participants approached the interview process by making use of metaphors to relate their positive experiences of working in academia. Metaphors are an indirect form of communication that people typically adopt in circumstances that they find profoundly meaningful (Robertson, 1996). Lakoff and Johnson (1980) argued that metaphors are used automatically, not only in language, but also in thought and action to understand what we think, what we experience and what we do every day. It seems appropriate to apply the adoption and definition of metaphors according to Lakoff and Johnson because it originates within the field of psychology and seeks to understand what the participants thought and experienced every day. Because metaphors are used to understand by projecting patterns from one domain of experience in order to structure another domain of a different kind, they helped to answer the research question by facilitating the understanding of positive experiences of working in academia.

Summary of the General Themes Identified

The mother hen. The *mother hen* as indicated in Figure 11 is a general role that academics adopted to enable performance of the different job elements related to teaching

and learning, research and community engagement. While the *mother hen* has a positive connotation which largely encompasses a caring role, it simultaneously has a negative element which has to do with overprotectiveness, and therefore potentially inhibiting the independence of leaners. The caring role of the *mother hen* was carried out through a related theme - *keeping it in the family* - which implies that it was accomplished through close relationship interaction with different academic stake holders, particularly students, parents and colleagues, some from outside of the institution. The identified subthemes that reflect the different roles of being a *mother hen* are: my brother's keeper, broker and wedding planner.

Figure 11. The mother hen role

Creating positive spaces. Positive spaces, demonstrated as Figure 12 are regarded as psychological, spiritual and physical spaces that participants created within the challenging academic context to enable performance of the different job elements related to teaching and learning, research, community engagement and academic citizenship. The positive spaces identified in this research included redefining the geographical and time boundaries of working in academia. Positive spaces allowed academics to become creative by conducting their work from home, on weekends and collaboratively with fellow academics from other institutions. The creation of these spaces was influenced by adopting the flexibility element of an ODL context.

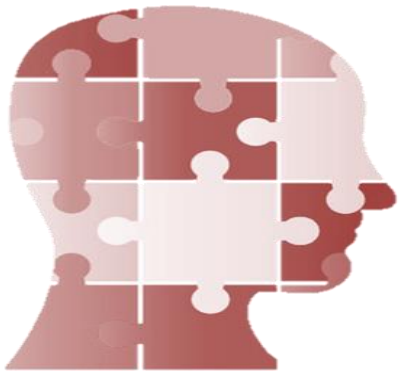

Figure 12. Creating positive spaces

It is not a bed of roses. The metaphor, *it is not a bed of roses,* shown in Figure 13 symbolises that there are both positive and negative experiences of working in academia. In this theme, the focus was on the negatives referred to herein as *challenges*. The challenges have to be understood within the context of positive experiences of working in academia. They included a variety of stressors at the personal and group levels and they included problems that were affecting students but were expressed by academics, challenges experienced by academics as well as academic personal challenges.

Figure 13. It is not a bed of roses

The unjust versus just world. The *unjust versus just world* illustrated in Figure 14 was another metaphor used to characterise the contradictions of what is experienced at an organisational academic level. The *just and unjust world* focuses on both the good and the bad activities, facilities and conditions obtaining at an organisational level. The just world

therefore includes activities that facilitated the positive experiences of working in academia such as graduation ceremonies, professional development opportunities, awards, accolades and achievements (AAA), monetary incentives and resources. The unjust world, on the other hand, represents all the perceived challenges from an organisational level that were regarded as slowing down the positive experiences of working in academia.

Figure 14. The unjust versus just world

Us and them. The *us and them* metaphor as depicted by Figure 15 describes the interaction pattern between academics and other academic community members. This theme developed from the tendency among several participants to talk about us and them, identifying those that fit in and those that did not fit in within the existing formal and informal structures.

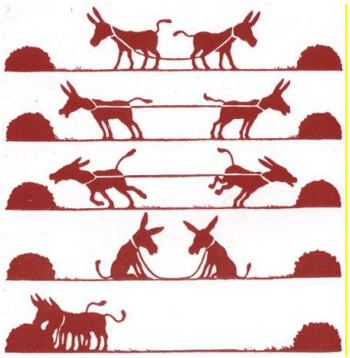

Figure 15. Us and them

The theme was therefore characterised by interaction between the following stakeholders demonstrated in Figure 16: top management and union representatives, academic and top management, between academics; academic in-group members and academic out-group members and, lastly, students and academics.

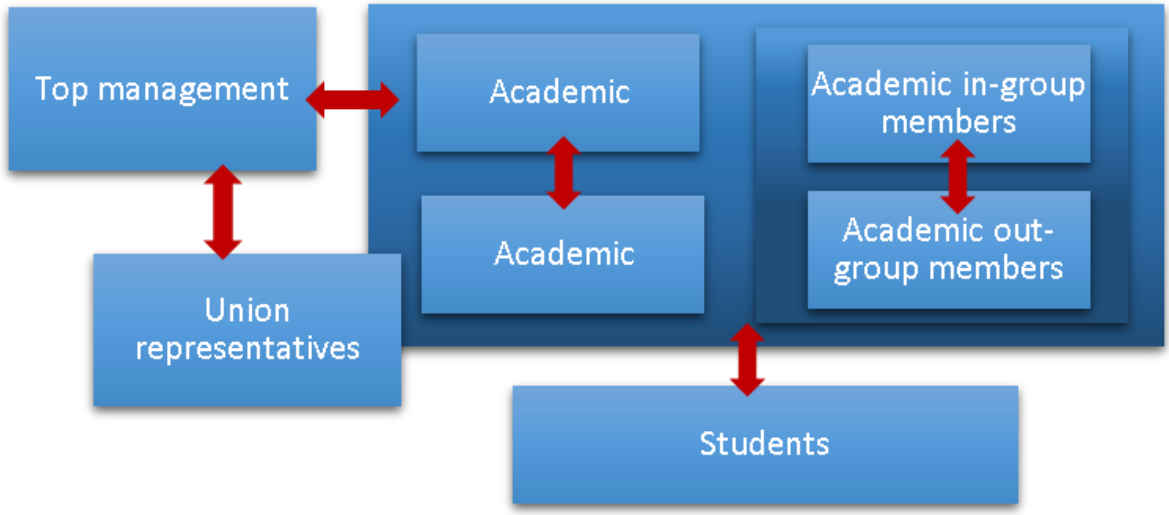

Figure 16. Interaction between the different stakeholders that constitutes *Us and them*

Discussion of Each Theme

The themes and their subthemes summarised above are discussed below in detail.

The mother hen role. Throughout the conversations with different academics, all the participants expressed the *mother hen* as characterising the different roles that they performed as academics. The *mother hen* role, which has a caring effect, is adopted during the interaction mostly with students who were regarded as the main clients of academics.

The *mother hen* role is reflected by the following appreciative, affectionate and concerned statements below.

Female Full Professor*: I love the field of xxx. Most of all, I love developing people and also the focus of my doctorate was developing people. It was also*

about developing a support programme for students to develop their employability and to me that is important.

The participant above emphasised her appreciation for her professional field which is located in the humanities/ social sciences and therefore consistent with caring for people in general. The participant further highlighted that her PhD was specifically about caring for students by focusing on training and developing of students.

Female Lecturer*: Of course some of the students fall by the way side but I note.... there is one that did totally badly. She actually did badly for all her Honours. I do not know what happened and I tried to find out from her maybe she was sick because for all her modules she got 20 something. She has been doing well. She went from 85% in her research module to 23%, I was like what happened? She is still a bit cagey but I said okay I am not going to push you, if she is ready to talk she will come and talk maybe she is going through a divorce. I do not know what happened.*

In the example above, the participant came across as concerned, empathetic and patient towards a post-graduate student. The participant further seemed to be showing interest in this specific student by following her academic progress. The participant was willing to wait and assist the student when the student was ready to engage.

Female Lecturer*: The most interesting part I, I think, this is what I've been doing, even while I was a post-graduate student, to interact with …especially the undergraduate students because in most cases, I remember, even myself, when I was at that level, you've got no clue of what is going on like after completing your junior degree, what is in your mind by that time is to say "No, after completing my degree, I'm going to look for a job." That is the only thing. You*

don't think about continuing with your studies, because you don't know where are you going with your… So to interact with such people and then, you are like a role model to them. So when they talk to you, they want to find out how is it like when you've reached those levels, and all those things. So it's very much important, ja, to interact with them, and then show them that "Look, guys, this is the way to go." We understand that sometimes, depending on the background, ja ….

This participant also come across as empathetic towards students and expressed her caring behaviour by adopting a mentoring role towards them.

The *mother hen* role is regarded as the core role of positive experiences of working in academia. This theme is in line with Higgs' (2002) acknowledgement of the social role that a university plays, especially in South Africa. From this view, the main task of a university is seen as contributing to the founding and building of a democratic society in order to meet the needs of the state and the economy (Higgs, 2002). This is done by supporting the development of students.

In this study, it was clear that the *mother hen* role permeated different academic activities carried out either individually or simultaneously, such as teaching undergraduate and postgraduate students, supervising Master's and doctoral students, planning different activities related to teaching, research and community engagement, provision of support and counselling, mentoring and others.

According to Ntshoe et al. (2008), the neo managerialism discourse has impacted significantly on the traditional core function of universities in general, and that the role of academics in particular had become more diversified and demanding because they are no longer limited to teaching and research as core academic deliverables. In Mapesela's (2004)

view, some of the challenges facing academics have to do with additional roles that have been added, such as being a facilitator, counsellor, mentor, role model and administrator. Most of the participants spoke with a lot of enthusiasm and affection about their different roles towards their students and different members of the academic community. The *mother hen* role seems to contradict both Ntshoe et al. (2008) and Mapesela (2004).

Keeping it in the family. *Keeping it in the family* describes how the *mother hen* role is carried out between students, fellow academics and other community members. The *mother hen* role occurred through a process of working within a close knit relationship. A close relationship interaction allowed for establishing and nurturing relationships. The example below indicates the perceived relationship between one academic and her students.

> Female Lecturer*: We are not here for anybody else but them. If there are no students at Unisa, there is no job for us. We are not going to say, we are here for research because it does not change the institution life internally. It might give us visibility outside but so what, without students we are nothing. And we do not have, we have no careers. For me they are sort of my adopted kids. I do not have any kids, so I have sort of adopted them. I follow their careers. My last Honours student, I said to her: "You know what. I am happy with the work that we have, let us publish this. You finish your Honours. You can register for your Master's."*

This example, through the use of the metaphor of students as one's children, reflects the closeness, caring and protective role that academics sometimes play towards their students. This closeness and caring occurred within the context of teaching and learning and conducting research. Another participant shared the following close helping relationship with her post graduate students:

Female Professor*: So, my preference with post graduate students is that I must help them too, as much as I can. As I say it is not always easy for me over the distance but I do not know if this is valid, what I then do is that I invite them to come to me for a week and then they stay with me in my house so that they do not have further expenses, for example about one month ago I had my one student from Malawi and then three weeks ago I had Zambian student who is staying in KZN now and then they come and we work for that whole week and that I enjoy because personal contact, you want to know about ODL and personal contact is important, it is a better bridge to ODL relationships because you know sometimes you do ODL and you will compromise in some of the aspects just to get the job done and especially if there is poor language proficiency and that kind of thing, but once a student meet me, see what is it that I like, how I prefer thing…then the ODL thing becomes quite easier.*

Although keeping it in the family is about academics supporting students through maintaining close relationships with them, it seems that some academics also appreciated establishing close relationship relationships with fellow colleagues. An extract below is indicative of one academic's appreciation of close relationships with fellow academics.

Male Associate Professor*: Everything that I did in my academic career is as a result of relationships which I established in the process and opportunities in those relationships which opened up for me. That is how I ended up with my first journal article and that is how I got approached in relation to the journal editing and also in relation to all these was as a result of my relationship with senior academics in our field.*

From the above examples it becomes clear that, through keeping it in the family, academics are able to bridge the physical and psychological distance created by the nature of

ODL. Keeping it in the family therefore allows for close helping relationships between students and academics and between academics. The close relationship between academics could be regarded as enabling the performance of academic citizenship where academics are able to support and help each other grow professionally. This sub-theme further addresses the criticism by Light et al. (Light et al., 2001) that, despite the benefits, the use of technology in teaching can dehumanise learning, and minimise direct contact between instructor and students.

In addition to working closely with students, collaborative work with colleagues from outside the university, that is community workers, national and international collaborators created by the different academics seemed to be a positive factor. Myers (2000) identified close relationships as having a positive relationship with happiness. In the view of Hertzberg et al. (1959), interpersonal relations with supervisors, subordinates and peers were regarded as extrinsic factors. Hertzberg et al.'s (1959) theory of job satisfaction is therefore partially contradicted in this research since the extrinsic factors did not contribute to job satisfaction when present, but rather to job dissatisfaction when absent, a finding that Perrachione et al. (2008) also reached.

In addition to face-to-face interaction, the different mediums of communication found in an ODL context such as ITC tools and telephone communication were reported as being utilised during the interaction with the different members.

My brother's keeper. The *mother hen* role included the subtheme of *my brother's keeper*. This sub-theme focused on taking care and assisting different relevant stakeholders such as fellow colleagues, parents, and general academic community members. This was consistently performed by most academics because they considered it in line with the role of being an academic, and, more specifically, as part of community engagement, and it also

linked in with the helping profession in the Humanities. The following extract illustrates this theme:

> Female Lecturer*: There is this student that is doing well and is in his final year, but has lost interest in his studies and has not been doing assignments and stuff. So the mother had called in and she is a distressed parent and cannot understand what was going on. So we are busy helping him and the CoD managed to give me her numbers. And so the pleasure of being able to see the mother smile is fulfilling. Yes, things like that and when a student fails a module for five times and you call them in and help them and after that you receive a call, it is fulfilling, saying yoh… I passed. I mean if you get a degree because I have helped you, it becomes very fulfilling.*

The positive experience of helping others did not only apply to helping students. As the following extract indicates, it extended to helping colleagues.

> Female Lecturer*: I was having this person. She tried the SBL when they had a bridging module and she failed. She stopped, tried, tried to register in the department and for an MCom but was told if you have a Btech you cannot do an M but she said, I said to her you are a single mom with three kids. You need to move from P8 to P7 and the only way you can do that is with an M. I said, alright, you can do that. You can put that hurdle; let's do what they want us to do. I will help you. They wanted her to do the research module before she can register for the M. I said, I will help you. It is time, not even an issue. I am not going to supervise you but you can get somebody to supervise you. It is proper because I am not at work. If I supervise her and she pass, it will look like I did her a favour. I will assist you, it is not a problem .We co-authored an article now coming out next month. It is going to raise a lot of eyebrows. I took it upon*

myself to say what, I got mentored by somebody, now he is an associate professor. Why can't I take the skill now and learn from them and instill them in somebody else, assist somebody to where they need to be. There is no need for me to be selfish. I am mentoring her, something which I feel even then, I am not a manager. I do not have to do it but I felt you know that they have failed her as a department. If you have people like that take them under your wing, you grow them.

The wedding planner. The *wedding planner* role focused on the planning of events, functions and specific academic activities in general. This dynamic role requires someone who is flexible and understands the details and uniqueness of each academic activity. The wedding planner can simultaneously execute the *my brother's keeper* role. Examples of a wedding planner are illustrated below:

Male Associate Professor*: What I enjoy is that I think I get a kick out of the ... [Long silence]....I get a kick out of the organising component of everything. I like organising. I like planning. I am the one who can spend a week planning, what we are going to do about the XXX programme. I am the one who always organises what we are going to do in the programme. That is reflecting on the programme, how can we change things and who are we going to bring in. So, the planning. I am a typical wedding planner, wedding organiser.*

Another example of a different wedding planner theme is demonstrated below:

Female Lecturer: *I was a convener of the academic desk where we established an academic desk last year so it was easy to deal with academic issues because we found that a lot of stuff that has to do with academic issues a lot of admin staff were not able to represent us adequately. We established a desk that is run by*

four people that deal with stuff like your relocation issues, disciplinary issues, victimization, and like people were not promoted and you find that somebody has got a different colour and that person gets a promotion and things like that. So, it took me out of office and then I became a member of UBF and they used me on full time basis. So, I was not in the department at all, but what happened was because I am an academic and I was still expected to service the students, I will be at UBF during the week between 8 and 4 pm but from 4 to 8 pm I will be at in the office attending to student queries and stuff like that. I was basically doing two jobs at the same time but it was okay I did not really mind.

The above demonstrates the satisfaction and happiness that wedding planners gets when weddings in the form of different academic events are planned and achieved.

The broker. The broker is also a specific role played by academics and it focuses on being the middleman or consultant. For example, academics are service providers to their students who are regarded as their clients/consumers, fellow colleagues; academic community members' such as members of a certain field of study, for example, mathematics, and the general community members.

Male Associate Professor*: The National Research Foundation NRF (NRF), they are supporting the NANO technology field, because it's a new field. They put more effort in terms of funding the projects in that field. And then they've introduced another, the aspects of this technology, to say "No, look guys, people of the…, even the industries, they are not aware of this new technology." "So who is going to make them aware? People involved in that research or in that field of research, they have to go out there, and then talk to the students, talk to the industries, because they are the ones who talk to the community because they*

are the ones who are going to use this technology. You cannot develop something that people know nothing about.

In the above extract, an academic expressed being a broker by playing a middle man between the community members and the NRF who are regarded as the service providers.

The next extract indicates an academic who served different roles as a broker to both undergraduate and post graduate learners.

Male Associate Professor*: Allow me to make this differentiation between formal academic preparations and getting support for student development relationships. The relation to my role as an academic is that I got both in this role where I do supervise both master's and doctoral students I also take extensive opportunity to supervising those in academic. I take the internship or the academic development of students quite seriously. Then, I only have face to face interaction with master's students. It is very difficult with the type of environment with which we the get in relation with the students. So, in one of my modules we have 9 000 students. It is very difficult to engage in their personal development and during this process where it is obviously a lot easier with master's or doctoral level where you having a person in front of you. The thing which I try to do with my all my modules in research methodology is that we only focus on these aspects to train the masses but other than that from honours downwards the system does not allow you to be able to contribute to their development as people, obviously as practitioners but there is definitely no way.*

This theme supports the finding that, in general, individuals with higher well-being tend to have closer and more supportive social relationship than individuals with low baseline life satisfaction (Diener & Biswas-Diener, 2008). They also have high levels of organisational

citizenship, which means that they are more likely to do tasks not required by their job, such as helping co-workers (Diener & Biswas Diener, 2008). The manner in which people relate to each other as colleagues or others in the workplace plays a role in defining their relationships and shaping their views of the world (Hulin, 2002).

However, this theme is contrary to Hertzberg et al.'s (1959) two-factor theory which held that relationship was an extrinsic factor and did not contribute to job satisfaction when present, but rather to job dissatisfaction when absent (Perrachione et al., 2008). It is clear that relationships with colleagues and other academic community members such as students and parents play a significant role in experiencing positive experiences of working in academia.

Creating positive spaces. Participants also highlighted that they created and made use of positive spaces to enable them to conduct the different job elements related to teaching and learning, research and community engagement within the challenging academic working environment. Positive spaces are both psychological and physical.

Flexible working hours. Several participants indicated that the experience of conducting one's work in a positive space was facilitated by the flexibility of the ODL context. The participants reported that the flexibility of the ODL environment enabled them to conduct their different academic tasks, such as marking, preparing lessons and so forth, according to their preferred time schedule, locations and individual energy levels. Among other things, this flexibility of time protected academics from being stuck in traffic or wasting time looking for limited parking which is a scarce resource at the institution. One academic commented:

> Male Lecturer*: I usually decide that I will leave a place as soon as possible if I am not happy but in this case I do not know why I am ok here. The other good thing is that you get this flexibility and you can come to work at nine if you want*

to go somewhere. In some places people do not have that. Things like that add to the positive and I know that I complain but I always say these are the positives. I think I am happy and there are no challenges as such besides what I mentioned.

Another academic expressed appreciation of the flexibility of the working hours as follows:

Male Professor : *I came in 2012 January 1st , I started here at Unisa as a Senior Lecturer. I think the academic environment is quite conducive to my personality, It is quite flexible and it is not structured. The 8 to 5 environment will not work for me.*

From the quotations, working flexible hours allows academics an opportunity to perform some of their work without having to be at the campus. This is similar to Schulze's (2005) report that, in her study of job satisfaction of black academics, job satisfaction was enhanced by numerous job context features such as working flexible hours.

Work, work and work. The impression I got from several of the academics was that their academic work was an integral part of their entire lives. This was not typically framed in a negative manner (as in failing to maintain proper boundaries and a healthy work-life balance), but rather as something to celebrate: the positive space associated with academic work extends beyond the office to include their wider life and identity. Examples of *work, work and work* are quoted below:

Male Associate Professor*: I am one of those people who will go on TV and preach about all the good things we do and how from my point of view academia can be a rewarding experience. For me it is, it fits with me, I am Unisa and Unisa is me…that type of a thing. It may sound arrogant but that is how I feel about my job. I feel extremely positive about what I am doing. So, in terms of my*

average day, I work. So whether I come to the office or whether I am at home, or whether it is weekend, whether holiday, I work.

Female Lecturer*: For me is when they…students come to me and say I really appreciate all the help you did and say that I have really made it. I think you know in an ODL environment there is no interaction, no human interaction between them. I think those times that I was working in the evening from 4 to 8 students loved it they had access to me after their own working hours. I found it strenuous but after time I was like oh…. So, they already knew that if I try her line at about 5 pm, she will possibly be there line at about pm I will get hold of her but it felt good although it is a small number but I really felt good about it. It gave me that satisfaction to say I might not be changing the lives of other 1000 but these that know that let me pick up the phone and ask. So, some students fail and they do module four times and it does not look good on their transcripts, it reflects bad on, it reflects bad on us as lecturers. But I think I was working with a very good team. People that we can sit down with and brainstorm things like picking up what student are struggling with from their assignment and then we give them extra practice on myunisa so that they can understand. So, it helped me to get through most of the years.*

The above examples highlight an appreciation of the general work of academics as providing an opportunity to create positive space irrespective of the geographical context and time periods. The quotation echoes Hulin (2002) view that the obligatory nature of work gives structure to everyday life by moving beyond the physical place of work to home and during holidays when academics are not expected to work. From the above, the definition of work engagement by Schaufeli et al. (2002) which is adopted in this research implies that academics with high levels of energy and mental resilience while working (vigour), a sense

of significance in their work (dedication) which is complemented by the experience of enthusiasm, inspiration and challenges (absorption), high concentration levels and immersion in the work-related activities with difficulty detaching themselves from the work, will experience engagement in their academic roles. The work, work, work sub-theme enabled the academics in this study to perform job elements such as research, teaching and learning, and community engagement.

It is all about research! Unlike the *work, work and work* sub-theme which indicated involvement in all academic activities as positive, some participants emphasised only research activity as allowing them to create positive paces. The following participant reported:

> Male Lecturer*: Ja, I enjoy research. It takes my time, it swallows me. I think bit by bit is eating me way and eeh..I use to work and I had friends, I had life, I know I have knocked off and I know that I can go and have fun somewhere but now after work I think it is the best time to go into the internet, it is much faster, research is much faster, and you see bit by bit you withdrawing from what you use to do. The life you used to do, friends and attending all the funerals and all weddings and functions unless it is necessary. It is eating away in that sense. I am not saying that it is bad but I am saying…it is not like somebody is pushing you on your face and that is one thing about research when you love it you end up, you do not need extra motivation. You do not need someone to push you. You do not need a deadline, on Sunday you can just go through a literature search and you see what it that I am getting myself into is. Like I said, the thinking, the thinking part of it. You know, where, when you have a complete document, when you have a final articles, when you have a final product and you see that this is my thinking, can I think up to this level and you feel like I am capable of thinking*

in that level because it is all about thinking and that is why most of my colleagues from my field who do not love research and they are thinking that you are thinking too much. They do not want you to think too much. Hehehehe, so I like that part of thinking too much and reading too many books. People are saying that I am reading too many books and but eeh. Of course, maybe eeh, the needs around research that were there before, the fear that was created that research is a monster, perhaps contributed towards that. So, I have dealt with that and know what is it. Here I am saying….

This participant expressed feeling of internal motivation and experiences of states of flow. This is supported by Csikszentmihalyi's (1996) view that flow has been found to be more prevalent in scholarly and creative work. In addition, conducting research is an ideal activity for entering flow (B. Martin, 2011). This is because advanced skills are required and intense concentration is needed, for example, when making sense of data, understanding theory and planning a research project. Other research aspects such as reading a research paper and relating it to one's own ideas may require considerable mental effort. The experience of engagement is influenced by, amongst others things, the state of flow which occurs when an individual experiences the optimal combination between skills and challenges (Moneta & Csikszentmihalyi, 1996).

In support of the satisfaction of research, the following participant had this to say:

Male Associate Professor*:However at Unisa what I do not like, about the undergrad teaching is the amount of time you've got to prepare study guides, that's why I like to keep being a research professor working from home!*

From the above quotations, it seems that some academics experienced research as offering more satisfaction than teaching and learning and that sometimes dissatisfaction in academia is derived from undergraduate teaching and learning activities.

The freedom to pursue one's interest and to publish where one wants. The freedom to pursue one's interest and to publish where one wants was identified as another sub-theme that academics experienced as meaningful. Through publishing, academics expressed the freedom to collaborate both nationally and internationally as indicated below:

> Male Full Professor*: I've collaborated with people from sub disciplines that are different from [inaudible] and again what's nice is collaboration, not only within Universities and also some of my ex-students. So by virtue of my publishing in these international journals, they have read my papers, I have read some of their papers, we are rated. We have met at conferences and all those sort of things. So we tend to know each other's work, not just in Iran but globally, China, Canada, wherever.*

Another academic shared the following about having a space to express his research interest:

> Male Full Professor*: I like the freedom to be able to pursue research in what tickles my fancy, in what pleases me, unlike in the case where you doing research for a company, they prescribe to you, please conduct the research in this particular thing, give a report that will tell us about this particular problem, but now as an academic and specifically in my field, I mean in xxxx, I research that which I find interesting and which my fellow practitioners will also find interesting. So the flexibility is something that I like, I enjoy that very much. Furthermore it gives you freedom to publish where you deem to get the best*

readership, unlike prescribed research, you're doing research for a company, for some mining company et cetera, to start with they might not even allow you to publish the findings, you write the report for them, in academia I publish where I want to publish. But then of course, as you know now currently, within the South African context, they've got what they call accredited journals and they've got so called non accredited journals. You might find now there are very good journals but unfortunately are not in the list of accredited journals but now as an academic I've got the freedom to even publish in those non-accredited journals, even if there's pressure within the university to say publish within accredited journals because that generates money for the university, I don't have to always do that and I personally, I tend to balance my, the journals I choose to publish out there of course, the majority will be accredited journals for obvious reasons, you know, it's to generate money for the university and for yourself as well.

The freedom to pursue one's interest and to publish where one wants, was appreciated further by some academics as offering them a space to publish in non-accredited journals which they experienced as meaningful. Publishing was also perceived by some academics as sharing about one's work and therefore contributing to the generation of knowledge.

Teaching and learning. Teaching and learning is another theme expressed by the different participants under positive spaces. One participant reflected:

Male Lecturer*: I wouldn't say that I derive joy from academia per se but I will say that I have created my own space, positive space where I come in and say what is it that I enjoy the most and say I enjoy reading, I enjoy studying, I enjoy eeh, helping students. So, then you create classes, workshops, eeh, one on one in terms of students contact classes, then you still keep, then you have the motivation to wake up in the morning. Besides that, tjuu, this place is cruel.*

Another academic had the following to say:

Female Lecturer*: …what I enjoy about my work… I think working with students from the time when they sign up your module. Unfortunately a lot of students find themselves in a situation that whatever programme they sign in, they find that this module is compulsory and they do not have that background to that will assist them to have and appreciate and understanding of the of the subject. Working with students who would come to you and say I am totally blank. I do not know where to start and all that. I think it is more out of panic. You sort of give them guidance, you can work every week through a chapter or a study unit. For me, a student that does not have finance background when they get 50% it is as much as good as they get a distinction. So, I am happy if the student works consistently throughout the year and they communicate via e-mail and I make follow-up with them, how are you finding out this chapter and when they pass exams they say guess what, I have passed the exam, I did not even think I will make it. I think part of it is the psychological because they think it is big to do financial management .*

From the above quotations, positive experiences were created by identifying teaching and learning activities that enhance positive experiences such as workshops, helping students and reading. It further becomes clear that the adoption of these activities were created within what is sometimes considered as negative academic environment.

It seems then that the process of *creating positive spaces* requires academics to adopt their personal resources such as creativity or optimism to achieve the desirable goals. According to Peterson (2000) "optimism has been linked to academic performance, positive mood and good morale, perseverance, effective problem solving, occupational and political success, popularity, good health, long life and freedom from trauma. This is contradictory to

pessimism which foreshadows depression, passivity, failure, social estrangement, morbidity and mortality" (p. 44). Unlike the previous theme of research, it seems that states of flow are difficult to maintain during teaching and learning. In the view of B. Martin (2011), teaching and administration has increased the number of potential interruptions and distractions which makes it difficult to maintain flow.

Community engagement. The last theme depicted under positive spaces is community engagement which is one of the key performance areas of academics.

> Female Full Professor*: But I do like the community engagement aspect as well. Me and my collegue we have been involved with other colleagues from the start and every year we go with them and offer a few lecturers on health and wellness. So, that is one part and I like it because we also get into places where we would not otherwise get into, I mean going into the heart of Diepsloot and once we have been in different places in KZN, Western Cape and Gugulethu. And you kind of get a sense that you're making a difference because if you do not spread this specific health and wellness message it would not reach those people otherwise.*

Another academic expressed the following:

> Female Lecturer: *Yes, what drives me is also on community engagement and most of my studies is on HIV and Diabetes and it is impact on communities. I mean, I am also involved in community projects also jah… it boils down to helping if maybe not a student but a community at large or the public at large. So, giving back.*

From the above quotations, it seems as if positive spaces were also created when some participants physically occupied certain places during their community engagement activities that they regarded as meaningful. This could be regarded as tapping into untouched

territories. This is in line with Mwaniki's (2010) view that community engagement can open up new research venues, provide new material for teaching, make what faculty seem to view as relevant and, not incidentally, make faculty feel good about what they do.

The theme of positive spaces contributes to job satisfaction through personal attitude and intrinsic factors such as achievement in the research field, teaching and learning and extrinsic factors such community engagement. These findings confirm Hertzberg et al.'s (1959) theory with regard to job satisfaction. From this research, academic work in an ODL university includes teaching, research, academic citizenship and community engagement. Academics also perform administrative work, although this is not defined as the core work of academics.

It is not a bed of roses. Since the academic context was experienced by some academics as not so stress-free and without challenges, the theme that *it is not a bed of roses* was expressed. The focus of this theme is related to challenges experienced by students and academics, challenges at a departmental level and challenges at an individual level. All these encounters were acknowledged by some participants as impacting negatively in their daily functioning of academic work. Some of the participants spoke about the challenges in a relaxed manner while others spoke in a frustrated manner.

Challenges from students. A majority of the participants reported student challenges as the main stressors in an ODL context due to high student numbers, especially in undergraduate modules. This challenge is associated with the primary purpose of ODL institutions in South Africa which is to enable access to higher education for many black people who were excluded due to the apartheid system (Makoe, 2015; Ngubane-Mokiwa & Letseka, 2015). In addition, participants expressed that they were constantly dealing with many student queries. Students' queries included, amongst others, perceived unfair treatment from lecturers, general unprofessional service offered by the university, and problems with

accessing technology, for example, difficulty in downloading study material, accessing marks and so forth. These problems were reported to be usually communicated through e-mails, telephone calls or face-to-face interaction whereby students would just pitch up without making appointments. These problems are similar to those expressed in a face-to-face institution (Mapesela, 2004). The following are some of the dissatisfactions expressed.

> Female Lecturer*: There are also challenges of large student numbers who we need for financing the university and I mean even if you have a bigger team of staff to work on or one administrator per team, I as the coordinator must still box assignments, make copies of my memos, we really do not have time for all that.*

The above quotation indicates the disadvantage of globalisation where government is forced to reduce higher education funding. As a result, higher education institutions have been expected to grow and accommodate high student enrolments (Moja, 2004). According to Rouhani (2007), high student numbers have also resulted from internationalisation which means increased workload for academics. Amongst others, increased workload and work intensification are regarded as the most important factors contributing to academic dissatisfaction (G. Anderson, 2006).

Other factors that might contribute to academic dissatisfaction are access policies which came with the new cohort of students coming from disadvantaged backgrounds that did not seem to be adequately prepared for the challenge of university studies. This meant that academics had to attend to students' problems which were caused by this unpreparedness (Mapesela, 2004), as the following excerpt illustrates:

> Female Lecturer*: You know with Unisa students they get 90, 80% but with English we are a bit strict. So, she got 30% and she wrote to the whole university, the university principal and all the departments she was connected to.*

She wrote to Dep of education, all departments. She wrote to Deans and Managers, everybody to complain that she got 30% and it has never happened to her in the history of Unisa .She usually gets 70% upwards. And then it was sent to our Dean and our school Director. Then, the Deputy Dean asked who this Lecturer is involved? Then I had to write a report and account. It made me angry because I wasted time. I spent a week working on that because it is a report you write going to your Dean and only to discover that the student has plagiarised but I even told my head of department that I know in cases like that where a student get 30% it means it did not go well or she has plagiarised. I said let the student send her script and we will check. It was plagiarism all the way. The student should not have got 30% but it should have been around 18% but it is the way it was handled. It went all over and everybody wanted me to account and I wrote reports. I submitted the reports and after that it went quiet. No feedback, no nothing! So, those are your minor, they are not minor if they raise your blood pressure.

Problems with the ITC system also were reported as making life difficult for academics.

Male Lecturer*: E-learning, you know sometimes students can't open the PDF that are uploaded to myUnisa and they will e-mail you and you going to sit and e-mail each and every study unit, each and every chapter. Everything you going to sent it through. When you send it, you are going to phone. Have you received everything? Are you sure, have you downloaded?*

The above quotation is in line with Good's (2009) view that universities must be aware of the fact that many instructors remain reluctant to use technology in their teaching because

of, amongst other things, lack of institutional support and training, lack of incentives, a general distrust of technology, or because they are satisfied with learning as it is.

Challenges from academics. Unlike the above challenges which were experienced by students, grievances under this sub-theme were uniquely related to and expressed by academics. Such academic grievances included human resources, unfair labour practices, research and teaching issues. It was also stated that some of the academic grievances were referred and handled by union representatives and others by Chairs of Departments (CODs). One participant seemed to have accepted that academic grievances are part of working in academia and he consoled himself by saying:

> Male Professor*: In general, I want to believe that the sky is the limit and I am not going to complain about things like marking and all that. That comes with the territory. That is part of the territory.*

> Another academic dealt with her frustrations by stating the following contradiction:

> Female Lecturer: *We have this new online module which I am in charge of it and have to know what online teaching is all about. It is sort of like a pilot to us because we started first time this semester doing an online module. That is why I said it is fun but challenging because you learn about things and sometimes things do not go well. That is the challenging part. It is mixed. Challenging but fun. The fun part is learning. For me it is like the j-router is giving us problems. So, you have to come up with a way of sorting it out and you have to assist makers. You also have to work on it. So obviously you press this and press that. They tell you this is how things should be done. At the end of the day it is like oooh I have learned something new. For me that is the fun part*

> Another participant expressed her annoyance regarding IT:

Female Lecturer*: You cannot just put stuff in place that is not going to work. Ask us what they want. There is so many different ways with technology, for example with myUnisa, how many people use that? There are more exciting methods like Twitter, make it legal and I can use it but do not say use it at your own risk because then you are putting me in a position of I can be sued if I can say something on twitter, facebook etc. It is out there for students.*

It seems that ITC system is perceived by academics and students as a challenge and it is therefore experienced by some academics as having a negative effect because they do not possess the ITC skills to address the presented challenges. This also supports Good's (2009) view that universities must be aware of the fact that many instructors remain reluctant to use ICT.

Departmental encounters. A few participants expressed challenges that were experienced at a group level, for example, in specific departments, teams or modules. The departmental challenges were around issues of quality assurance, high student numbers in the context of professional training especially in the social sciences, staff shortages and communication problems in the form of frequent long meetings. Some academics experienced subject-specific problems such as teaching quantitative methodology to students without face-to-face interaction or teaching specific subjects such as social work in an ODL context. One participant from the English Department shared the following:

Female Lecturer*: We are no longer having discussion classes and I think that English is not like other departments because we need to teach them, well to write. My idea is that we have online learning but we also need to interact with them.*

Another female academic expressed the following challenges:

Female Lecturer: I think the main challenge that we experience for social work it is for practical work. My main challenge is that the one module is theoretical and the other one is practical. So, i think the challenge is how do you effectively teach social work to such a huge number of students.The main challenge within the department I think there is a big staff number and we need to meet more given that everybody is driving in their own direction. I think that is another challenge that i think we need to work more strongly as a team to get us together but I see that starting to happen. I see staff is taking more initiative to gather small number of team together. So, I see a lot of positive experiences.

Lack of face-to-face interaction with students in certain departments is perceived as a challenge that disadvantages students from optimally learning. The lack of face-to face interaction, according to Ngubane-Mokiwa and Letseka (2015), is because ODL has been characterised by the type of a-synchronous learning that is associated with distance or correspondence learning. It is further commended for transforming higher education from an elite system to a mass system (Olakulehin & Singh, 2013) and criticised for the low output of students (Van Zyl, 2013).

Personal hiccups. There were a few challenges that academics expressed as impacting on their personal systems. These included demands which came from outside the academic context but had the tendency of impacting negatively on the well-being of academic individuals and therefore their work, for example, financial shortages, being a single parent, and so forth. These demands were perceived as sometimes creating conflict between academic demands and personal life. An example of this sub-category is of a youngish male academic who complained that academia was taking all his time and leaving him with no time to socialise outside of academia. The need to socialise was viewed as necessary given that he was at a stage where he needed to find himself a life partner whom he could later

marry. Another example, as expressed by one male academic, related to conflict between academic activities and parental issues where he was charged with disciplinary conduct because he took paternity leave when his child was born while his paper where he was a paper leader was being written in his absence. The charge was irrespective of the fact that policy allowed for 4 days paternity leave. The assessment policy also did not allow academics to take leave during exams.

From this theme, job dissatisfaction at an interpersonal and group level was perceived as tedious. Some of the causes in this theme include heavy workloads and lack of contact with the students and IT related problems that affected academics and students. This supports G. Anderson's (2006) view that increased workload and work intensification are regarded as the most important factors contributing to academic dissatisfaction. The boring activities were also presented as not challenging, for example, academics performing administrative work, marking or requiring specialised skills ICT skills to handle unreliable ICT problems. These findings are similar to those by Schulze (2009).

Hertzberg et al.'s (1959) theory with regards to dissatisfaction is therefore partially confirmed because some of the dissatisfactions are caused by intrinsic factors. Barkhuizein and Rothmann (2008) regarded high workloads and working longer hours as contributing to the high levels of occupational stress in academia, and this is borne out to some degree by the findings of this study.

The just and unjust world. This theme is directed at the contradictions and benefits of what is experienced by academics at an organisational level through the expression of the *just and unjust world*. The just world was embodied by all the perceived good things that academics experienced as fulfilling because they contribute to the making of a better working context such as development opportunities, awards, accolades, achievement (AAA) and monetary incentives and the availability of resources. The unjust world encompassed all the

perceived activities that were regarded as hampering the smooth functioning of academia such as unfair practices and organisational stressors.

Development opportunities. Most participants indicated appreciation for the development opportunities that the university offered to them. These participants stated that they experienced development opportunities as empowering and contributing towards their professional growth. As a result, these opportunities were perceived as preparing the academics for promotional opportunities and to become competent academics. The examples below indicate what was shared by some participants:

> Female Lecturer*: The Young academics programme, is a very good programme. It gives exposure on how Unisa is functioning, to interacting with big fishes within Unisa.*
>
> Female Senior Lecturer*: Aah my positive experiences are that I had a lot of positive experiences along my journey. I think being a late developer because I am almost 50 and you come in with a lot of things that you need to develop. What is positive for me is that Unisa really gives a lot of opportunities if you grab them. So, I came in as a Junior Lecturer, and I had an M at that stage but eeh mmmm you had to publish about three articles before you were promoted to lecturer's level. So while I was busy with my doctorate I then, when I look back I see others are getting their M's and being promoted to lecturership, I tried to publish so that I could go into a lecturers' scale. So, in a way it was not that easy and it was a struggle for me to get to a lecturer's position but it was good to me because it gave me a push given that I has to start publishing.*

Awards, accolades and achievements (AAA) and monetary incentives. Some participants highlighted and appreciated the awards, accolades, and achievements (AAA)

opportunities and monetary incentives. The participants reported that these organisational rewards made them feel appreciated and valued, recognised and contributing to the overall functioning of the institution. One of the participants reported:

> Female Lecturer*: I got this academic excellence award which had to do with our module. It had to do with how we work with students and how the whole module was structured. All the nitty gritty with the module. The primary lecturer had to submit a form and we had to sit together and compile all the things that are required and we submitted. And then they send letters to congratulate us. We went to the second floor, the principal was there and everybody was there. As I said, I was here for such a short period of time and I was already feeling recognised. We also got some few cents. You do not just get a certificate.*

Another participant who was acknowledged both inside and outside of the organisation shared the following:

> Male Professor*: That certificate there…(pointing) I got the young academic award in the field , so that's …you have to be under forty and then like your PhD should be, I think less than seven years… And then in the same year, I also got an NRF rating. So sometime in October, at the beginning of… no, it was in September, ja, so I got an email to say you have been successful so you'll be included in, it's a book, Who is Who in the world and then they put your biography in that book, ja. And then those are some of the things that are… in June there was this Mail and Guardian whereby it's a national thing again, they were looking at the young I would say South African in different…… ja, and then I think it was about two hundred young South Africans from art, health, from different categories, so I was one of them under the science and technology, so I was also in that 2013 two hundred top young South Africans, ja. Then I'm also in*

one of the magazines now, they call it… what is this magazine… you know, I'm not used to these things… it's a…your Destiny magazine ja, it's for men, so ja, they profiled about I think forty young South Africans in different categories again, so called it the power of forty. Because we're less than forty and all those things so they said the power of forty. So I'm also there, it's a December, November issue.

It's there and then on Friday, was in on Thursday, there was a Gauteng, they call it a Gauteng Book Project. It's that company, the publishing company together with the office of the premier of Gauteng, there are many stakeholders contributing because it's about promoting Gauteng, so I've also got an invitation and then I'm also there, I got that book. It's a little bit thick but it's about Gauteng and then… Ja, there is a section whereby they say people from Gauteng and then we talk, like from my experience and then ja, it said something about Gauteng, how do I see Gauteng and then from there they put your… something similar to what is in the Destiny magazine, ja. so ja, those are the things that I was doing this year, it was quite hectic.

Acknowledgement happens when academics are given huge responsibility (positive hecticness), certificates, remuneration and awards.

Male Full Professor*: If you get rated, apart from the incentive, the money that you'll get from NRF, they usually give you twenty thousand rand for your research, if you are rated and you publish a paper in the previous year like in 2012, in 2013, apart from the money that you get from the Department of Education, the university gives you extra twenty thousand rand to use as you please [inaudible] everything, that kind of incentive I really like, I honestly, honestly like, that's one of the positive that I like.*

The above subthemes, development opportunities, awards, accolades, achievements and monetary incentives are viewed as recognition factors which are regarded as intrinsic factors (Hertzberg et al., 1959). Social factors such as rewards contribute towards feelings of competence (R. M. Ryan & Deci, 2000) and they in turn enhance intrinsic motivation. The intrinsic variables relate to personal growth and developments are also referred to as motivators or satisfiers, which are responsible for job satisfaction (Hertzberg et al., 1959). These results, therefore, confirm Hertzberg et al.'s (1959) theory of job satisfaction.

According to the literature, the availability of intrinsic factors causes happy feelings or positive attitudes (Perrachione et al., 2008). They are, therefore, responsible for job satisfaction. In addition, intrinsic motivation is associated more with interest, excitement, and confidence, which in turn is manifested as enhanced performance, persistence, and creativity (Deci & Ryan, 1991; Sheldon et al., 1997), and general well-being (R. M. Ryan et al., 1995). This seems to be supported by the findings of the current research.

Resources. In addition to the above, a few participants appreciated the availability of what they termed general resources that the institution was offering. Job resources can play either an intrinsic or extrinsic motivational role (Bakker et al., 2008; Rothmann & Jordaan, 2006). Such resources were perceived as assisting them to optimally perform their academic tasks. One of the participants stated:

> Male Associate Professor*: I appreciate the support that the university is giving us. I think it is quite amazing. We are buying equipment now for the XXX research and I think as soon as…you know we have new labs in Florida Campus, that we will be moving there. We are supposed to be there by now but since we are still running some experiments at the labs here, that is why we are still here. So I think ja, we will make a huge contribution.*

Another participant had the following to say about the Unisa student system as a form of resource:

> Female Lecturer*: I am one person - I am not gonna change Unisa. Unisa is there and there are certain things that are drilled in a certain way. Those things are cast in stone but at least there are certain students that I have identified and am following their careers. I have students that are doing diplomas they are passionate about what they are doing but unfortunately did not make a cut to do BCom in their field. I am saying, you know what, it is fine because you gonna have an extra piece of paper that a BCom person does not have and your BCom person will have one piece of paper that you do not have. You are actually at an advantage because after completing you can get employment and stuff like that. You know fortunately I can keep track, thanks to the Unisa system.*

The excerpts above support Schaufeli et al.'s (2002) argument that job and personal resources are crucial for the understanding of academics with vigour, dedication, and absorption. Resources are extrinsic variables which are regarded as hygiene factors (Hertzberg et al., 1959). According to Perrachione et al. (2008), extrinsic factors do not contribute to job satisfaction when present, but rather to job dissatisfaction when absent. However, the participants in this study experienced these factors as positive and therefore contributing to job satisfaction, thus partially contradicting Hertzberg et al.'s (1959) theory of job satisfaction.

Organisational stressors. A few of the stressors conveyed from the organisational level included lack of office space and parking and lack of proper IT support. Lack of parking was viewed as having a great influence on the time academics can start and leave work. This was further perceived to influence the availability of academics to attend to

students' queries and other activities such as being on time for meetings. An example of an unsatisfied academic due to office space and parking is shared below:

> Female Lecturer*: My biggest frustration was that I did not have an office but at some point, I started sharing office as an academic. That for me was a big No because as you are trying to work, the other person is on the phone. You are trying to assist a student and the other person is busy with something else. You can never really be synchronised. They did try a situation where maybe I come in Monday, Wednesday and Friday and the other person comes in Tuesdays and Thursdays but there are times when you need to be in office but there are times when you do not want to be in the office and that did not really work. Then there is the issue of parking. So, parking is a big delay and you start getting to work at 6 am because you want to make sure you get parking. On those days, I used to get here at 6, by 10 am am done . Am tired. The alarm use to ring at around 3. I had no reason to get up early. I do not have kids to drop to school. That environment for me, it only got better when I got reserve parking because of the X thing.*

It was also reported that the university made use of dual modes of teaching including traditional mediums (paper based) in the form of tutorial letters, and Information Communication Technology (ICT) e-mail communication, online courses, myUnisa and the JRouter. It was the latter that was reported as frustrating due to lack of IT support to maintain it. Such lack of support was perceived as contributing to the daily personal stressors of academics as expressed below by a disgusted academic who further shared her ideal working context:

> Female Lecturer*: An ideal will be if you want to implement systems and modernise things you must have full test of systems by professionals, fully*

equipped IT people and I think Unisa has got finances to be able to do that. Do not implement the program and test it with the pilot. I mean the pilot study does not work with such a big university. It works for small numbers. So, the ideal thing will be that before you implement things check if everything is working 200% in order and send it down to me to say yes, it has been tested and yes I am enthusiastic. Do not get me on JRouter that is not working then I hate it, I am forced to use it, then I am negative. Then you can see it and it is your fault because you did not test it properly. So, just implement stuff and have a long working plan if you want to go online sure but my studentship are from a previously disadvantaged background. I cannot see you help them; you give a tablet, internet and charge it in tuition. Maybe they can be able to afford tuition. So, you do not implement an e-tutor on my module because you did not ask me if I need an e-tutor! An e-tutor is this extra person and it means that it is me training this extra person and requiring my time. I do not mind an extra person but ask me whether I need an e-tutor or not, test, what you need an e-tutor for. Do not test on one pilot; test it on different pilots for different colleges, departments to see it works. So, the ideal will be Unisa before you implement something Unisa please test it.

Us versus them. The theme, *us versus them*, focuses on the perceived psychological safety of distinguishing between those members that are perceived to fit versus members that are perceived as not fitting. *Us and them* focuses on the interaction patterns between senior management and union representatives, academics and senior management, between academic colleagues and lastly academics and students. The power relation dynamic that came from the different interactions influenced how members in the academic community perceived each other. As a result, the negative relations were used to describe the bad

collectives and the positive relations to identify the good collectives. Participants reported positive feelings towards members that were perceived to be fitting in and were perceived as providing psychological safety and vice versa. Through defining the different roles of their colleagues, academics seem to have justified the perceived existing differences and similarities. In addition, negative feelings were communicated towards members that held powerful positions and were perceived as not fitting, or as *them*. Under this theme, the following three different sub-themes emerged.

Good collective versus bad collective. The union representatives and the academics were perceived to be a good collective and senior management was perceived to be a bad collective. The union representatives were regarded as heroes who were protecting the interests of the academics. The bad collective was sometimes dealt with through a confrontational or challenging style by academics. It seemed that, most of the time, academics tended to complain about senior management, without communicating to them directly, by hiding in the corridors or by gossiping.

Unlike the two groups above that were classified as either good or bad, students might be perceived as either, with good students being regarded as a good collective and the opposite being regarded as a bad collective. A full professor who at one point was part of management shared the following experience:

> Male Full Professor: *I might just add now, that's one thing that I did not enjoy when I was in management, because there's, in certain universities, there's them and us, if you are in management you are them, we are the people in [inaudible] I did not like that, which is the reason I did not request for an extension, I said, let me go back [inaudible] I just want to do my research.*

Another academic shared her experience from the young academic programme and how it gave her an exposure to challenge some of the management that are regarded as them in their different portfolios.

> Female Lecturer: *The young academic programme is what HR does,...And I suppose that is where I got to meet all these big fish which I rub shoulders, that I rush to whenever I got a problem. To me it gave me exposure, like with people like X.XX XXX I take her on with things like research certain things that I thought were unfair in the research and innovation policy and that forms the basis of discrimination because what is applied in Kings' is not the same to what it is applied in reality. I challenged her and people thought I was crazy. She was like this and I thought she is only human. She is an academic and she has been where we are. So it is her policy and I have every right to challenge her. People like XXX will come and tell you about their portfolio, how glamorous they are. I said No. Even the XXX of this world. Even Prof XXX, everytime he sees me, he thinks here come trouble. I challenge people on facts not just challenge you for the sake of it.*

In-group and out-group members. Some academics reported that they functioned within teams where they got support and motivation to perform their duties optimally. The implication of the other side of such positive relationships is that they exclude others that are perceived as out group members. The out group members, therefore, missed opportunities of sharing and learning from in group members. This resulted in the development of team members versus non-team members. The effect of such team dynamics is that of not belonging and being isolated as indicated by this participant:

> Male Lecturer: *When you get into this place, obviously not all of them but my experience is that you get into an office, your first day they call everyone in, they*

welcome you, they introduce themselves, you come here, you are here by 7 o'clock and you feel like you are lost because people come in say, some greet you, some do not greet you. They get into their own offices and, and everyone go on with their own lives. So, it's never about us, it's about me and my office and what I need to do, and what I needed to achieve, and to get out of academia. So, it's never about us, it has always been about me, and me and me. And that my own observation and for a young person it can be lonely.

Contrary to the above, an example of the experience of in-group member is illustrated below.

Male Associate Professor: *Firstly I was very fortunate that all the teams that I am part of, all the people that I work with I really people that I like. We like each other. We get along well, we can drink wine together, and we can drink coffee together. We will meet on public holidays, we became friends. You know we started as colleagues. I think it helps to have people that you enjoy and I think that they enjoy me. Up until today in the groups that I keep on thinking even research and I think in all the different groups that am in research and all levels of tuition I have been allowed to explore. When i come up with an idea, it is as if people do not necessary have to agree…*

Another dynamic under this theme was that of academics versus students as expressed throughout this chapter. The role differentiation between lecturers and students was consistently emphasised by academics when referring to both the positive and negative experiences of working in academia. In most instances, the students were regarded as "them" or "out-group" and the academics as us and therefore in-group. This distinction was further used to highlight the identity of both students and academics.

Implications of the Findings

Positive experiences were explored in this research by providing a context in which academics could qualitatively share their personal positive experiences. In line with Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi's (2000) definition of integrated model of happiness, a happy academic was described through the adoption of (sometimes contradictory) metaphoric themes. The main themes identified were: the *mother hen* role,*creating positive spaces, it is not a bed of roses*, the *just and unjust world* and us versus them.

In an academic ODL context, meaningfulness was experienced through the combination of the explicit positive and implicit negative elements of the *mother hen* role. Meaningful work contributes to a general sense that life has meaning and a feeling of well-being. The *mother hen* role further allowed a space to fulfil the different academic activities that were expressed through the sub-theme roles: the broker, wedding planner and my brother's keeper. These subthemes could be carried out either individually or simultaneously such as through teaching undergraduate and postgraduate students, supervising master's and doctoral students, planning different activities related to teaching such as workshops, research activities, academic citizenship and community engagement, and the provision of support to and counselling and mentoring others.

The helping roles were facilitated by keeping it in the family. This implies a process of working with students, parents, fellow academics both in and outside of the institution and other academic community stake holders such as industry or professional bodies within a close knit relationship. A close relationship interaction further allowed for establishing and nurturing relationships. According to Seligman (2002a), meaningfulness is linked to happiness. This is because meaning is a necessary requirement for happiness (De Beers, 2007; Peterson et al., 2005; Seligman, 2002a). Since psychological meaningfulness reflects a sense of purpose or personal connection to work (Spreitzer, 1995), it is also associated with

and has been confirmed to predict work engagement (Nelson & Simmons, 2003; Peterson et al., 2005). This seems to be confirmed by the findings of this study.

Creating positive spaces was also regarded as having facilitated meaningfulness. Through *creating positive spaces*, academics were able to access psychological and physical spaces that allowed them to perform their jobs optimally. This was encouraged by the academics' positive attitudes in the form of being optimistic and through adopting the flexibility element of an ODL academic context. These spaces compensated for the organisational stressors (which included lack of office space and parking and lack of proper IT support from the institution) discussed under the *just and unjust world*. Meaningfulness as expressed in this theme further indicated its relationship with happiness and job satisfaction. Job satisfaction was achieved through intrinsic and extrinsic factors that facilitated job satisfaction during the performance of research, teaching and learning and community engagement. These findings were partially in line with Hertzberg et al.'s (1959) theory of job satisfaction. Job satisfaction was also experienced when academics physically occupied places that they regarded as meaningful during community engagement activities. This is in line with Mwaniki's (2010) view that community engagement can make what faculty do seem to be relevant and make faculty feel good about what they do.

In addition, during the process of conducting research, participants expressed feelings of internal motivation and described how they experienced states of flow. This is supported by the views of Csikszentmihalyi (1996) and B. Martin (2011) that research allows entry to flow. However, the findings suggest that it is harder to reach states of flow during teaching and learning. This may be because, as B. Martin (2011), suggested, teaching and administration involve increased levels of interruption and distraction which make it difficult to maintain flow. Related to the concept of flow is engagement.

The subtheme, it is all about research, is linked to publishing, another activity that was identified as meaningful for academics. In addition to appreciating conducting research, academics expressed the enjoyment of freedom of publishing on topics of their personal interest. Teaching and learning of both undergraduate and post graduate students were expressed as holding secondary satisfaction after conducting research.

Contrary to the above themes that explicitly expressed positive experiences, academics claimed that the academic context is not stress-free and without challenges, using the metaphor that *it is not a bed of roses*. Participating academics expressed student challenges as the main stressors in an ODL context. This is linked to high student numbers, especially in undergraduate modules. This challenge is expressed contrary to the fact that teaching and learning were reported as satisfying. Challenges expressed by academics that have to do with high student numbers, work overload and dissatisfaction may be, as Moja (2004) argued, related to globalisation.

Additionally, challenges related to students included student queries such as unfair treatment from lecturers, unprofessional service offered by the university, problems with accessing technology, accessing marks, and plagiarism. In addition to these challenges are the stressors under the theme *just and unjust world* that have been highlighted above. Again, these challenges may be related to the pressures that internationalisation brings (Good, 2009; Rouhani, 2007).

Academic grievances and departmental issues expressed in this research can be regarded as products of managerialism and academic capitalism. Ntshoe et al. (2008) argued that managerialism places increased demands on the time of academics, resulting in work intensification. Increased workload and work intensification are regarded as the most important factors contributing to academic dissatisfaction (G. Anderson, 2006). Academic capitalism reflects the reality of many public research universities by drawing attention to the

way human resources are used in an increasingly competitive world (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997). According to Ntshoe et al. (2008), the impact of academic capitalism on the academic staff of publicly funded universities is that they operate in an increasingly competitive environment, deploying their academic capital, which may comprise teaching, research, consultancy skills or other applications of forms of academic knowledge. The few challenges that academics expressed as impacting on their personal systems were perceived as creating conflict between academic demands and personal life. Due to the high job demands that are placed on academics, they end up experiencing a substantial amount of ongoing occupational stress (Kinman, 2001) and burnout (Rothmann & Barkhuizen, 2008) which are linked to the internal and external aspects that influence academic work (Pienaar, 2009).

The *just and unjust world* metaphor covers the JD-R model that emphasises job demands and job resources as the predictors of work engagement (Bakker et al., 2008; J. L. P. Naudé & Rothmann, 2006). According to the JD-R model, work engagement is the relationship between job and personal resources on the one hand and positive outcomes on the other. The benefits and contradictions of what is experienced by academics at an organisational level through the expression of the *just and unjust world* theme seem to have mobilised the positive experiences of working in an academic context.

The metaphor, us versus them, reflects that a university is characterised by different stakeholders, who occupy different positions and therefore make diverse contributions according to their specific roles what (M. Makhanya, 2012).

From these results, the integrated model of positive experiences of working in academia which was proposed based on the literature review in Chapter 3 has been refined and it is thus presented in modified form in Figure 17.

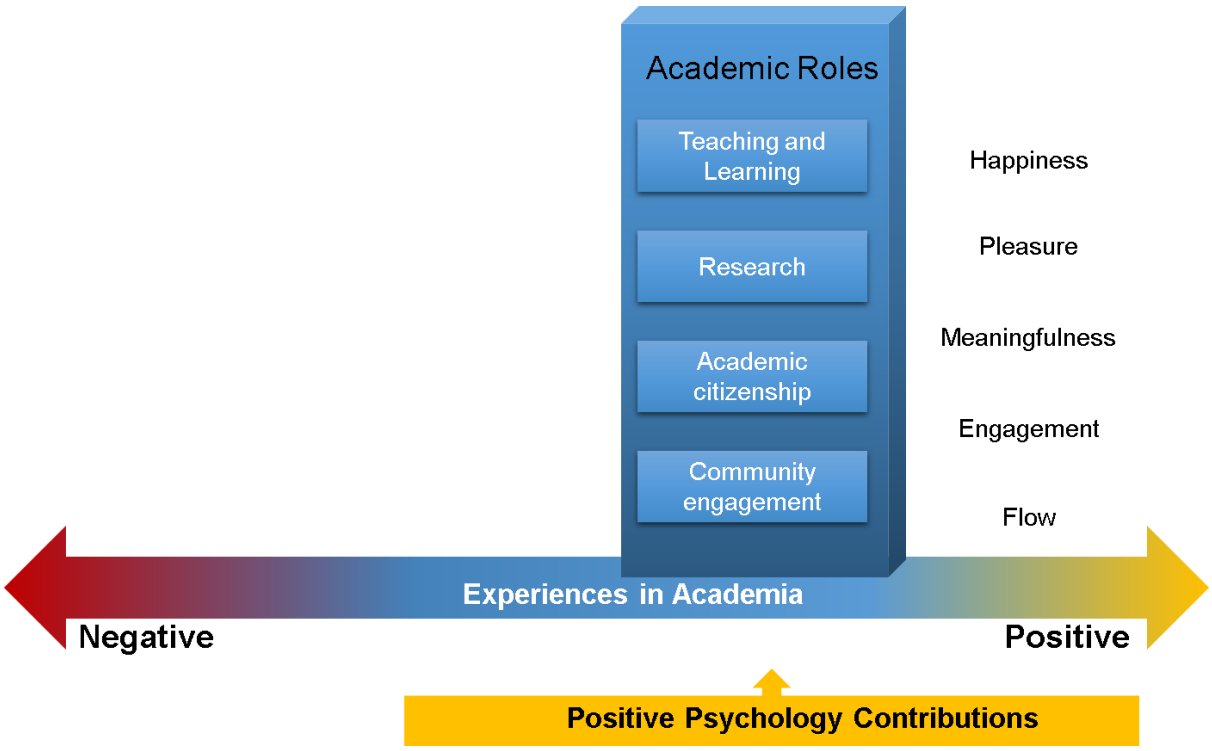

Figure 17. An integrated model of positive experiences of working in academia

Chapter Summary

Chapter 5 presented and discussed the qualitative results through the adoption of the following metaphoric themes: the *mother hen* role,*creating positive spaces, it is not a bed of roses,* the *just and unjust world* and *us and them*. The discussion of these themes was further combined with relevant literature. A happy academic was described in line with Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi's (2000) definition of positive psychology including, from the past, SWB and job satisfaction; from the present, happiness which include meaningfulness, engagement and flow; and from the future optimism in the form of adopting the *mother hen* role that allowed the experience of meaningfulness.

A happy academic expresses meaningfulness through the *mother hen* role and *creating positive spaces* in which core roles of being an academic are performed. In the context of this study, this was enabled by adopting the flexibility element of an ODL academic context and

being optimistic. Research activities allowed the experience of flow which is related to engagement. Through the *it is not a bed of roses* theme, academics were able to voice challenges which varied from challenges that are unique to academics, those that emanate from students and those personal challenges that impact on academic role functions. The just and unjust theme revealed the contradictions at an organisational level by highlighting the availability of resources versus the demands. The last theme, us versus them, indicated the interaction patterns between the senior management and union representative, between different teams of academics, academics and students and academics and senior management.

A Proposed Model for Understanding Positive Experiences of Working in Academia

Introduction

This chapter will focus on developing a model for how positive experiences of working in academia could be understood. The chapter is based on a meta-reflection on the theoretical approach adopted in this study, the literature reviewed, the empirical research and pragmatic considerations. Although the focus is on the model of how positive experiences of working in academia work could be understood, a description and interrogation of a traditional measuring tool, which was initially intended for in the beginning of the research process, will be presented. A deconstruction of understanding positive experiences of working in academia by applying *Lekgotla* as an indigenous South African model will be conducted. Healy's (2011) notion of *transformative dialogue* and Bujo's (1998) model of *palaver* will be used as part of the framework within which Lekgotla will be contextualised to understand positive experiences of working in academia.

Contextualising the Research Process

The research process was approached by firstly conducting a literature review. The concept of work was defined by including characteristics of academic work in higher education institutions particularly in an ODL context, since that is the context and focus of this study. The external and internal trends that influence academic work were also explored. In addition, the conceptualisations of positive experiences, positive experiences of work and specifically positive experiences of working in academia were discussed within the positive psychology framework.

The empirical research process was conducted within the interpretative paradigm by applying a qualitative methodology. The discussion on the qualitative methodology focused on case study research, purposive sampling, interviews as instruments for collecting data and interpretive data analysis. The following metaphoric themes were identified: the *mother hen* role, *creating positive spaces*, *it is not a bed of roses*, the *just and unjust world* and *us and them*. From the results, it was found that generally a happy academic expresses meaningfulness through *the mother hen* role and *creating positive spaces* in which core roles of being an academic are performed. In the context of this study, this was enabled by adopting the flexibility element of an ODL academic context and being optimistic. Research activities allowed the experience of flow which is related to engagement. Through the theme, *it is not a bed of roses*, academics were able to voice challenges which varied from those that are unique to academics, those that emanate from students and those personal challenges that impact on academic role functions. The *just and unjust world* theme revealed the contradictions at an organisational level by highlighting the availability of resources versus job demands. The last theme, *us versus them*, indicated the interaction pattern between the relevant stake holders such as senior management and union representatives, different teams of academics, individual academics and students and, lastly, academics and senior management.

Irrespective of the results obtained from the empirical process of understanding positive experiences of working in academia, a need for a more relevant, decolonised and practical approach to understanding positive experiences of working in academia was identified. In order to understand this new approach better, meta-reflections at the theoretical, empirical and pragmatic levels were followed to guide the process.

First things first: Reflection on the theoretical framework of understanding positive experiences of working in academia. The humanistic and positive psychology

paradigms applied in this research offered a baseline for understanding experiences of working in academia. These two approaches are not without limitations. From a theoretical stance, what I learned from this research is not to separate an understanding of positive from negative experiences of working in academia, despite the focus highlighted in the title of the thesis. Although the positive psychology paradigm within which positive experiences were conceptualised does not deny the negatives, by homing in on the positives, the negatives tend to become isolated as aberrations or as exceptions to the rule. As a result, a fragmented adoption of positive and negative experiences arguably results in a partial picture of experiences of working in academia.

I believe that the aim should rather be to look at experiences wholistically. Ramose (2002a) defined wholism as a process of becoming or evolving. This implies that human beings are not fixed, but rather engaged in a process of always improving and consequently becoming better versions of themselves. This suggests that, by punctuating experiences from a positive stance, we are therefore tampering with the wholistic process because the negative experiences which complete the full picture of experiences are not emphasised and they could therefore be regarded as left out.

Furthermore, through the adoption of a humanistic approach, one of the aims of this research, which is to understand the positive experiences of working in academia in totality or wholeness, has been only partially achieved. Reflectively, the humanist approach allows for a qualitative or descriptive methodology that enables the researcher to take into consideration the different aspects of people's being, such as their language, physical, psychological, social and historical surroundings. These different aspects assist in the interpretation and meaning-making of the experiences and worlds of participants. However, such aspects have been explored only in a limited way in this study. This is because, in this study, the cultural characteristics of the participants, such as, for example, the diverse

languages of the participants, were not sufficiently considered. In the first instance, such diverse languages were not actively encouraged and, therefore, they were not opted for by any of the participants. Kovach (2010) argued that having or using a common language, as is the case in this research through the adoption of the English language, does not serve to increase cultural understandings. The common language utilised may therefore not be a reflection of a common understanding of positive experiences of working in academia.

In addition, positive psychology was used in this study because it was assumed that it created context for the study of the relationship between work and well-being by acknowledging the cognitive, emotional and behavioural dimensions of academic participants. However, positive psychology is perceived to originate within a positivistic paradigm, and Baloyi (2008) criticised western science within which positivism is embedded. According to Baloyi, *science*, as we study and understand it today, is a product of the European evolution of ideas as well as practices and cannot therefore claim to be a universal representative of all knowledge systems. For example, western science is not necessarily consistent with the existential experiences of the indigenous peoples of Africa. It is, in fact, regarded as out of synchrony with local cultural knowledge (Okere, Njoku, & Devisch, 2005). By adopting positive psychology, we are therefore limiting ourselves to positive science and excluding the expression of other positive experiences as expressed by diverse academics. Despite this epistemological exclusion (M. B. Ramose, 2004), the empirical results of this study demonstrated that, although contradictory, both positive and negative experiences of working in academia exist together in the total experience of an individual. These findings therefore support Bujo's (2003) argument that Africans do not think in either/or terms, but rather in both/and categories.

Meta-Reflection on the Literature Review

Positive experiences in this study were understood within a positive psychology context. This was done by concentrating on Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi's (2000) subjective level constructs. Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000), in line with their definition of positive psychology, characterised comprehensive positive experiences as capturing the following constructs: from the past, subjective well-being (Diener, 2000); in the present, optimal experience (Massimini & Delle Fave, 2000) and happiness (Myers, 2000; R. M. Ryan & Deci, 2000); and, in the future, optimism (Peterson, 2000). In addition to these constructs, the self-determination theory of motivation (S. E. Taylor et al., 2000) and psychosocial characteristics (Salovey et al., 2000) were applied to describe positive experiences. Below are the definitions and discussions of these constructs.

The implication of the definition and application of positive psychology as a field that originated from a western cultural experience must be redefined when applied, for example, in an indigenous context. For example, within the South African indigenous context, when an individual is happy and satisfied at work, positive experiences are expressed through benefiting community members or those in the surrounds. This therefore implies that positive experiences would have been located within a communal context. It seems that the application and conceptualisation of *positive* in this study is, therefore, problematic. This is because in an African university there coexist academics of different cultural backgrounds whose experiences could be seem as sometimes contradicting each other and at other times complementing each other. Ramose (personal communication, 16 May, 2018) regarded this co-existence of diverse academics as requiring a different conceptualisation and understanding of positive experiences. By failing to adopt an approach that accommodates all academics, one that is biased towards particular cultural experiences, we are regarding positive experiences as equal and the same for all different academics that exist in an African

university. However, people are not the same, which suggests that the conceptualisation of positive experiences needs to be context- or situation-specific. Such a conceptualisation would be in line with accommodating what Portnoi (2003) referred to as the new academic workforce that was introduced under the Employment Equity Act (EEA) No. 55 of 1998 that also introduced different characteristics and new interaction dynamics. The emphasis of this Act is on targeting the employment of previously disadvantaged groups, such as blacks, people with disability and females.

Meta-Reflection at a Methodological Level

At a methodological level, this research reflected on the relationship between the researcher and the participants. This is in line with Kovach's (2010) view that the stories of both the researcher and research participants are reflected in the meanings being made. Smith (2012) concurred with Kovach that the power dynamic of research is embedded in, amongst others, the relationship with the research subjects. From section 4.5.1 of this dissertation, it becomes clear that my idea of conducting interviews resulted in somewhat hesitant participation by some of the targeted academics. Initially, my expectation was that, because research is a core performance area of academics, they would readily participate. This assumption was based on the fact that, within their work context, academics are expected to conduct research. Research is therefore regarded as the unique priority which distinguishes a university from other similar institutions (M. Makhanya, 2007). Additionally, research has become the most important criterion used to influence academic promotion and status (Pienaar, 2009).

However, some academics experienced difficulties when they were expected to switch roles from being *research experts* to research participants. The implication here is that an academic's expected research role does not translate into the expected behaviour. Other

reasons for the reluctance of the participants to participate in the study could be related to the fact that the research process was conducted by myself as an academic colleague to other academics, and that, as a researcher, I was someone some participants knew and were familiar with (an insider), and this could have had negative connotations which influenced what participants could share and how much they could share. Other observed challenges were difficulties by the participants to spontaneously share their positive experiences of working in academia. It is assumed that this is because people do not think in dichotomous terms (positive and negative), or people do not consider the participant growth-enhancing process whereby they reflect on how they understand and interact with their different contexts, and therefore experiences.

Reflectively, the identified methodological challenges suggest that research as a knowledge-production mechanism is perceived as having both ethical and power issues. The fact that, as a researcher, I was not in control of the research process supports Hindess' (1977) view that it is an illusion to regard the researcher as assuming a powerful position when conducting research. The implication in this study is therefore that the traditional power role of a researcher was challenged by the participants. They seemed to have switched their behaviour depending on what made sense to them. Smith (2012) described the illusion of the power of researchers from a different angle. According to Smith, "the power of a researcher lies in the fact that the researchers hold a position where they are in receipt of privileged information. They can use their status and "expertise" to influence what is known and what is not known" (p. 178). This argument becomes relevant in this research, especially within the context of the interpretative paradigm adopted.

According to Ramose (personal communication, 16 May, 2018) the researcher seems to have interfered with the authentic positive experiences of working in academia as reported by the participants. After the participants shared their positive experiences, the researcher

played with that information by exposing it to the process of data analysis, thereby reducing it to "the researcher's own understanding of positive experiences of working in academia". Ramose (personal communication, 16 May, 2018) criticised the data analysis process as creating tension between the two levels of, firstly, the authentic knowledge as reported by participants and, secondly, the analysis of the reduced data by the researcher. Ramose's view is that primary information collected from the participants was compromised through the data analysis process by the researcher. Ramose does not condone the data analysis process as it indicates the promotion of the researcher's ideas versus those of the participants. In addition, authors such as Hindess (1977), Ramose (2002b) and Smith (2012) have long questioned the nature of the research process, challenging details such as the position of the researcher and who will benefit from research processes. This study confirms that, at an ethical level, an ethically constructed study will demonstrate shared power between the research participants and the researcher.

Description of a *Traditional* Measuring Tool and its Implications for Understanding Positive Experiences of Working in Academia

Initially, when conceptualising and designing the study, my intention was to create a framework and later a quantitative measuring tool to assess positive experiences of working in academia. As I became involved in the study, I realised that such a measuring tool would not be ideal because it is not relevant and authentic to understanding positive experiences in an African university that includes diverse academic employees. Below is a discussion of the implications of creating a *traditional* measuring tool and its implications for understanding positive experiences of working in academia.

A measuring tool is described as any test, assessment measure, instrument, scale, procedure or technique that is used to assess (measure) human behaviour (C. Foxcroft &

Roodt, 2009). Within the field of psychology, a test is considered as an objective and standardised measure of a sample of behaviour (Anastasi, 1976). This implies a process that follows a specific process in terms of which someone (a psychologist or psychometrist) conducting measurement is doing something to someone or some people simultaneously to understand different aspects of human behaviour such as career interests, cognitive functioning, personality, learning potential and so forth. Among the different types of measuring tools are screening tests, intelligence tests, personality inventories and scales, achievement tests and so forth. C. Foxcroft and Roodt (2009) described the development of a psychological measuring tool as consisting of a carefully planned process involving the writing of items, pilot testing to determine the effectiveness of the items, choosing final items, administering the measure to a representative group of people to establish if the measure is valid and reliable, the development of norms, and compilation of a test manual. The implication is that, for a measuring tool to be considered appropriate, it must follow a carefully managed 'scientific process'.

Given the concerns that were raised and discussed under section 6.4, it seems problematic to want to suggest the development of a traditional measuring instrument in order to understand the positive experiences of working in academia. This is because a paradigm that looks at measurement follows a *scientific* process in the form of a quantitative approach. Quantitative approaches follow a prescriptive natural science mode and the measurement of the phenomena under investigation is emphasised to establish *objective knowledge* (Babbie & Mouton, 2010). Babbie and Mouton (2010) further pointed out that, in quantitative approaches, variables are central in describing and analysing human behaviour. Variables are related to the concept of measurement in that, for one to measure, one must be able to discern through identifying variables. In addition, the views and values of the people

involved are independent of the research process. The aim of the researcher in quantitative approach is to be objective as possible and not to influence the research process.

The adoption and application of such an approach would not capture the essence of the meaning of positive experiences of working in academia because it predetermines and generalises results and, therefore, poses the threat of misrepresenting positive experiences of working in academia by not acknowledging *otherness*. The issue of context therefore becomes crucial in describing experiences because, if we deny or limit the diverse experiences of the participants, we will not be basing the measuring instrument on their authentic experiences. It implies that we will be promoting sameness and equality as opposed to the co-existence of other experiences.

It is therefore appropriate to take into consideration the context within which the study was conducted by firstly acknowledging that the institution in which it was conducted is regarded as an African university that consists of diverse academics from different parts of Africa. Within the South African context, it means taking into consideration the Employment Equity Act (EEA) No.55 of 1998 as discussed in section 2.2.2.2 in terms of assuming that diversity factors influence the understanding of what are positive experiences, and therefore coming to the conclusion that what is positive to one person may not be positive to another. The implication is that we deal with a person first by considering their context which includes their cultural context. Okere (2005) argued that, in understanding every human activity, there must be more than one way, in fact many ways, of doing it, with each human group or culture structuring and colouring its own knowledge according to the specificities of its own environment.

In the views of Okere (2005), Mignolo (2011), Ramose (M. B. Ramose, 2002b, 2002a) and Nwoye (2015), not all aspects of a Eurocentric worldview, psychology and epistemology are relevant for solving the challenges of our current world. To be able to understand

positive experiences of working in academia differently, it is necessary to change our paradigm approach so that we are able to understand otherness. Mignolo (2011) emphasised that it is through the process of de-linking that we are able to achieve epistemic disobedience. According to Mignolo (2011), epistemic disobedience implies different ways of breaking away from colonial domination. This study, therefore, proposes the adoption of a different framework for understanding positive experiences of working in academia through the adoption and application of an alternative perspective.

Such an alternative perspective can be facilitated through embracing a decolonised methodology (Smith, 2012). In the view of Smith (2012), decolonised methodologies respond to traditional positivist approaches by attempting to recover, re-cognise, re-create and research back by utilising our own indigenous ontological and constructs. Mignolo (2011) concurred with Smith (2012) that epistemological decolonisation is needed to create different ways of doing by including other cultures that have long existed but were reduced to illegitimate status. The traditional measuring tool approach which is conceived from the western science therefore needs to be deconstructed to put science in its appropriate context. Such reconstructions and deconstructions need to be approached in a dialogical engagement and not a monologue to include the multicultural views of academics in an African university. It is within this given context that this research proposes the adoption of *Lekgotla* as a traditional African concept and intervention practice to understand positive experiences of working in academia. In the view of Higgs and Keevy (2009), Mudimbe (1988) and Hountondji (1985) regarded an intellectual product as African if it is produced or promoted by Africans. These authors further apply the geographical and cultural criterion of describing the meaning of African. Nwoye (2015) concurred with Mudimbe and Hountondji that an African product is developed by Africans for Africans. Given the diversity of the people of African ancestry, there would be no universal description of what is regarded as an African

product because there exist different views and angels. Nwoye (2015) however, emphasised that an African product must be premised on the African existence of knowing and doing. Nwoye's reference takes into consideration the ontological implications and therefore includes the physical and metaphysical nature of African being.

Contextualising Lekgotla

Once I realised that a western measuring tool was incongruent with what I was doing, I started exploring a more relevant African indigenous approach that could be applied to understanding positive experiences of working in academia. Lekgotla, as an indigenous South African intervention, struck me as relevant in understanding positive experience of working in academia. There is a considerable body of literature that focuses on Lekgotla, also known as Indaba, as an intervention that is used in the business or private sector. This implies that the original use of this concept has been tampered with to suit such an environment. Within the academic environment, I identified Healy's (2011) transformative dialogical approach and the model of palaver as described by Bujo (1998) as related concepts to the original use of Lekgotla. As a result, Healy's (2011) transformative dialogical approach and the model of palaver by Bujo (1998) will be adopted as frameworks for contextualising Lekgotla.

As a point of departure, an analysis of deliberative discourse will be briefly described as a contrasting approach within which Healy's transformation dialogue was built. This will be further followed by Healy's comparison and contrast of Young's (1996) and Simpson's (2001) points of view of the deliberative discourse. Lastly, Healy's (2011) thesis of transformative dialogue will be presented. Bujo's model of palaver will be described as a complement to the transformative dialogue.

The reason for contextualising Lekgotla with Healy's transformative dialogue is that, at an international level, the process of transformative dialogue is related to Lekgotla. In addition, although Healy is from Australia, as an indigenous person, he writes about the experiences of indigenous people from his context. It has been further identified that, at an African continental level, Bujo's practice of palaver (from Congo), is similar to Lekgotla. From these two comparisons, it becomes clear that the model of Lekgotla is not limited to an African context. Due to its dynamic nature it can be compared to other indigenous practices from other parts of the world.

Deliberative discourse is an approach that is considered as enhancing the inclusiveness and responsiveness, transparency and accountability of socio-political decision-making. During the process of deliberative discourse, participants come together and put aside their differences and arguments and ideological preferences in favour of finding and building on common ground. It aims at promoting free and open debate that is as inclusive as possible of diverse view points, and directs participants to engage in a *reflective deliberation* process (Healy, 2011).

Among other authors, Young (1996) criticised the standard deliberative model firstly because it focuses only on the symmetry requirement which is central to the Habermasian template that entails trading places or mirror imaging with the other and viewing the situation from their perspective. Similarly, Healy (2011) argued that it is impossible to fulfil the symmetry requirement because, by trading places, participants are subjected to a restricted exposure of mirror imaging that cannot withstand critical scrutiny. In the view of Young (1997b), it becomes impossible for people to be the same because they each bring different life histories, emotional habits and life plans to a relationship and, therefore, this makes their positions irreversible (Young, 1997a). Furthermore, Healy (2011) agreed with Young (1997b) that this approach is comprised of assumptions of uniformity and homogeneity that

hinder learning rather than enhance its ability to do justice to difference. These criticisms suggest that the deliberative model is culturally insensitive, and therefore not universal.

In addition, Young (2000) regarded the standard deliberative model to be one-sided since it concentrates on argumentation needs. Argumentation style is considered as a delimited and exclusive style of self-presentation which disadvantages the diverse cultural groupings to whom this style is unfamiliar or foreign. However, Young acknowledged that argument is a necessary element of public discussion that aims to make just and wise decisions through enabling participants to question, test, and share opinions through discussion, and to account for why they are in agreement with one another. However, she also expressed the opinion that there is a need to recognise and to accommodate a diversity of discursive styles through reconceptualising the argumentative deliberation which has dominated the standard model. Argument is therefore not supported because it promotes limited mutual understanding or transformative learning (Healy, 2011; Young, 2000). As a result, Young (2000) proposed the communicative reappropriation of the standard model which would accommodate more informal, narrative styles of communication which can enable a diversity of participants to articulate and effectively communicate their distinctive experiences in their own terms to others who occupy different socio-cultural standpoints (Young, 2000, 1996).

With regard to correcting the presumption of mirror imagery, Young (200) contended that we must avoid the symmetrical in favour of asymmetrical reciprocity. She therefore calls for a set of interrelated reforms aimed at correcting for the identified deficiencies by treating differences as a resource rather than a barrier to unity. Young referred to these reforms as the *communicative proposal* for corrective deficiencies of the standard model. Contrary to Young, Simpson (2001) proposed that asymmetrical reciprocity and an attack on the symmetry requirement is not enough for doing justice to difference and mutual learning.

Healy (2011) concurred with Simpson that the envisaged outcomes cannot be realised through a one-sided emphasis on asymmetry. These authors call for a realisation and recognition of the way in which our relations with others are both symmetrical and asymmetrical.

Transformative dialogue. Healy (2011) argued for "the need to expand the operative conception of deliberation in a more inclusive, egalitarian and, indeed, dialogical direction through the transformative dialogue" (p. 295). He conceptualised the transformative dialogue as an in-depth build on of Young's (2000) communicative proposal that goes beyond to do justice to the diversity and difference of the deliberative model (Healy, 2011). He emphasised that dealing with difference requires openly engaging with it by moving above its acceptance in dialogical reciprocity. Genuine dialogical engagement, according to Simpson (2001), implies an equal respectful, accountable and understanding of another. This dialogical interaction is regarded as open and different from the traditional way of understanding the self in relation with others, and therefore teaches us new ways of thinking, doing and being. This implies that participants in dialogue need to be willing to learn from, and be confronted by the other.

At the core of Healy's (2011) dialectical learning is the assumption of confirmation of comparable validity and dialogical equality. This means that all participants' inputs are equally important irrespective of their status, according to their own expressions, to enable learning to take place between all who participate. Furthermore, this means that, when dealing with diverse participants, the intention ought to be promoting transformative learning by respecting and protecting difference while simultaneously capitalising on similarities.

At the centre of dialogical commitment is the expectation of learning from each other and therefore exposing oneself to the process of transforming as opposed to the need for consensus as in the standard model. Healy's (2011) argument about consensus, as applied in

the standard model, is that it promotes sameness and therefore nullifies differences through its adoption of the argumentative approach. This is because the argumentative approach is regarded as emphasising the most dominant logic argument which is not reflective of diversity.

The model of palavar in Africa. Within the African context, Bujo's (1998) model of palaver is deemed relevant to provide a basis for understanding positive experiences of working in academia. This model can be seen as complementing Healy's (2011) concept of transformational dialogue. Similarly to Healy, Bujo (1998) emphasised the communal approach of engaging with socio-political issues where all participants are treated as equal partners.

The model of palaver is practiced in Congo as an efficient institutionalisation of communicative action to decide about matters that involve community members (Bujo, 1998). According to Bujo, "[t]his model takes the interests of the individual into consideration in such a way that it can successfully function at the micro-ethical level" (p. 41). The palaver does not include a council of elders whose main task is to advise the chief or king. According to Bujo (1998), the palaver uses competence and experience as criteria for selecting members. This implies involving wise men whose daily life experiences are similar to the rest of the other people involved. Through having similar life experiences, the argument on the table will be concerned with the people's existential interest. No-one is excluded from the discourse of palaver because participants are all members of the community. According to Bujo, the "process of finding solutions does not manoeuver or trick or force people but discusses issues by sharing of experiences, taking into consideration history of the community clan and interests of the living and the living dead" (p. 36). Since this whole procedure is communual in its approach, it must be carried on until a consensus is reached, and therefore it could be viewed as time consuming.

Bujo (1998) further recommended the palaver as an ideal model for developing a community of communication. He was of the view that the palaver model can be applied to all areas of life because it shows that norms can be and have to be found in a communal manner that is free of domination and in dialogue.

Like Healy, Bujo (1998) regarded the deliberative model as not relevant for effective communication action. It is for this reason that the palaver model accuses the ethics of discourse as being too elite-oriented. This is because the discourse is the privilege of those who are able to argue, wherein only the ability to argue reasonably counts. By virtue of this, those members of the community who cannot argue are eliminated, and therefore not included as part of the discourse. This implies that those members who do not argue because they cannot for different reasons according to the rules established by the ethics of discourse, are found to be morally under-developed. This approach is considered inhumane and another form of imperialism. It is because of these criticisms that Healy's transformative dialogue and the model of palaver are preferred and adopted as setting the context for Lekgotla that is discussed below.

Academic Lekgotla: Towards the development of a deconstructed intervention framework of understanding positive experiences of working in academia. My initial approach in this section was to look at academic literature in defining and describing what Lekgotla is, but I decided to take a different approach. Smith (2012) is of the view that "the problem with academic writing is that it is a form of selecting, arranging and presenting knowledge. It privileges sets of texts, views about the history of an idea, what issues count as significant, and by engaging in the same process uncritically, we too can render indigenous writers invisible or unimportant while reinforcing the validity of other writers" (p. 37).

Like most indigenous concepts and practices, the origin of Lekgotla is recorded through the indigenous oral tradition. Gyekye (1997) defines tradition as "any cultural product that

was created or pursued by past generations and that, having been accepted or preserved, in whole or in part, by successive generations, has been maintained to the present" (p. 221). Since the Lekgotla tradition is orally transmitted and as part of generating knowledge differently, I spoke to mostly knowledge bearers from Ga- Masemola village, in Limpopo Province who regard the practice of Lekgotla as part of their tradition and to Prof S. D. Matjila from Unisa in his capacity as someone who specialises in indigenous knowledge systems more specifically the Batswana cultural practices, poetry and literature. Below are the different conversational results with those knowledge barriers.

Mr K. Mahlase (An attorney by profession and one of the elders in his clan of Baphoto ba ba golo ba matladi a nkwele)

K. Mahlase (personal communication, 04 April, 2018) defines Lekgotla as a community, society or social organisation that deals with policies and strategies to maintain law and order in respective communities. According to Mahlase, at *the core of lekgotla is the focus on peaceful co-existence which is achieved through a consultation process. In communities where there are no Makgotla, there is no peace and no co-existence amongst the community members.*

Mrs M. J. Makobe (a retired principal Kgadi ya Baphotho and ngwetsi e kgolo yaba ga Makobe)

According to M.J. Makobe (personal communication, 03 April, 2018), in the Sepedi culture, Lekgotla is perceived as a meeting between a group of people, usually men but it can also be between women, who gather together to discuss a specific subject matter. The subject matter could vary from community related issues such as land distribution, farming in general, livestock, marital issues, parental concerns, security and protection of children and so forth. Makobe further mentions that, traditionally, a lekgotla was held in a secluded place, under a big tree where there were no disturbances.

Prof S. D. Matjila. (a Setswana Professor at the University of South Africa)

S. D. Matjila (personal communication, 18 April, 2018) refers to Lekgotla in Tswana as kgotla. According to Matjila (2018), kgotla is described as a public meeting, community council or traditional law court of a Botswana village. It is usually headed by the village chief or headman, and community decisions are always arrived at by consensus. According to Matjila, the historical origin of kgotla can be traced as far back as the 1800s. By then the Tswana had begun to develop the kgotla tradition. By the time British Empire had incorporated the nation of Botswana under their imperialist wing as the Bechuanaland Protectorate in 1885, the Tswana people had already developed a unique political culture centred around public consultation. The British government, in concurrence with its indirect governance strategy, encouraged this propensity through legislation which put into law what many chiefs had already begun to do, that is, bring all potential laws before a public assembly so as to benefit from their consultation. So, from then on, after devising legislation together with his advisers, the chief was expected to call a tribal assembly and to put whatever it was that he had produced before them for consideration. If the men assembled liked the proposal, the chief would surely implement it. If they did not like it, however, he would more often than not either scrap his plans or modify them to make them more agreeable to his subjects, though he was not legally bound to do so. This was perhaps due to the Tswana's unique political culture, which among other things, emphasised that the "Chief is Chief by grace of his tribe," a sentiment which certainly does not encourage unilateral domestic policy implementation.

Matjila further alluded to the fact that, although the size and scope of the tribal assemblies varied depending on the type of meeting as well as its subject, they all had the same basic format. The chief, his family, and his advisers sat in front of the assembly which would be seated around them in a semi-circle. Other than that, there was no set seating arrangement. Once seated, the chief would tell those in attendance his purpose for calling them all together. He would then relinquish the floor to his advisers and trusted headmen (elite political figures) who were charged with opening the debate. After the administrative elites had stated their own positions, the rest of the body was invited to ask questions and discuss the issue. Speakers were given unlimited time to deliver thoughts, criticisms, and to ask questions to every participant including government officials. If more than one participant wished to speak, precedence was given to the most aged and socially prominent one among or between them.

When the discussion died out, senior headmen and other political elites would again elucidate upon their own opinions. After hearing his officials' perspectives, the chief would announce his own decision on whatever

issue they had been considering to the entire assembly, and thus conclude the meeting.

Mr Choshane (Mokgomane (elderly) from the Matsimela clan)

K. Choshane (telephonic communication, 16 May, 2018) described Lekgotla from the Sepedi culture as a gathering of the community elders to deal with problems of the community. The term 'elders' implies the Bakgomana and Bakgoma as appropriate people that have close relations with the community chief. Such people are regarded as the eyes and ears of the chief but, most importantly, as having the interest of the community and chief in their hearts.

For one to belong to a Lekgotla, one's close relationship with the chief is considered. There is a specific structure that is adopted during the conversational meetings of Lekgotla. Members usually sit in a circular format as it is a traditional norm. The meetings usually take place at Moshate (the royal house of the chief).

Mr Masemola (Mokgomane (elderly) from Moshate (Royal house) and Mr Ratale a neighbour of Mr Masemola.

Mr M. Masemola and Mr M. Ratale (personal communication, 16 August, 2018) also described Lekgotla from the Sepedi culture. Another name for Lekgotla in Sepedi culture is Kgoro. It implies a meeting place where different community matters are discussed. It is important to note that Lekgotla is not only restricted to Moshate. Depending on the matters under discussion Lekgotla can be held at Moshate or according to the different clan places (Magoro). If a chief is also at fault, the community will hold a lekgotla go mo ahlola (for decision taking). One of the guiding principles during Lekgotla is respect. For example, when someone has been found guilty and they are punished to pay a fine, their personal or family circumstances are always taken into consideration.

According to Mr Masemola and Mr Ratale, in a Lekgotla, we are all equal. There is no one who is bigger or better than the others. When the collective decision (sephetho) is reached, anyone of the participating members has a right to stand and close the discussion. "*Taba ga e fetse ke motho, e fetsa ke rena. Ga se nna, ga se wena, ke rena ka moka, re ema ka lona*".

From the above descriptions, it becomes clear that the context of Lekgotla varies according to the diverse cultural groups of South Africa and according to different interests of the community. Lekgotla does not adopt an individual understanding. It is collaborative and consultative. Lekgotla is generally derived from the process of *wholeness* and respect and it is guided by the principle of Ubuntu. According to Ramose (2002a), Ubuntu implies treating fellow members as people, taking a humane, respectful and polite attitude. The following common themes were identified as capturing the essence of what Lekgotla is from the different sources or conversational partners:

a) Flexible and not rigid. It is worth mentioning that Lekgotla is not a rigid process. It is a flexible approach that is process-driven. It consists of a group of people that have the interests of the community members at heart. The formation or participants of Lekgotla will therefore differ according to the topic under discussion. Members of a specific Lekgotla are related and have knowledge of what is being discussed.

b) The general aim of Lekgotla is to discuss in totality specific issues through conversing and eventually reaching a consensus. This is done through an acknowledgement of the full participation of everyone involved.

c) In a Lekgotla, all members are regarded as equal partners. All members are therefore expected to participate irrespective of their status. The focus is on the discussion of the matter at hand and not who is making a contribution through a consultative process.

d) Through acknowledging full participation, a consensus is reached. This further leads to collective decision making.

e) Collective decision making and the solution at the end is not from one individual. It must come from the buy-in of all members, usually through the use of phrases such as *Ke laka leo* (I second or I echo your sentiments) which implies that the speaker also agrees with what is being said by other speakers.

Applying Lekgotla to Understand Positive Experiences of Working in Academia

In this section, I will discuss the process of how Lekgotla could be used to understand the positive experiences of working in academia. Traditionally, psychological assessments are used (typically by management) for decision making such as recruitment, placement, promotion, training, and career path training within different work contexts, and they are recognised for this kind of use by the HPCSA (Van de Vijver & Rothmann, 2004). Contrary to this, the adoption of academic Lekgotla does not promote and serve the interests of management because, by its nature, it includes everybody and it assumes an equality approach, meaning that everybody enters the communication process as equal partners and everybody's input is valued. Through the adoption of academic Lekgotla, participants would be able to understand themselves better, learn from each other and, therefore, will be provided with a space to reflect and share their unique personal experiences of working in academia.

The purpose of adopting academic Lekgotla in this research is therefore to facilitate the understanding of positive experiences of working in academia, without necessarily serving the interests of management. The target population is multicultural academics in an African ODL context.

Setting the context for academic Lekgotla through conversations. The process of adopting academic Lekgotla to understand positive experiences of working in academia would follow a conversational methodology. Through conversations, the purpose and objectives of Lekgotla would be elaborated by one of the participating academic members (explaining why participants are here and what will happen). Since the researcher would be amongst the academic participants, she would be expected to introduce herself, and to tell the participants about her research and what the results will be used for, who will have access to the results and other relevant information. The participants will be afforded a space to raise any questions, and to clarify misunderstandings. Since a Lekgotla is process-driven it does not adopt a rigid process that is predetermined.

Secondly, a conversational approach would be embraced to facilitate the expression of any anxieties, worries and concerns of the facilitator and participants. When compared to traditional interviews, conversations are perceived to be sensitive, fluid and not concrete (Kovach, 2010). They are regarded as not creating barriers. The conversational approach would also afford participants an opportunity to be treated as humans before they are regarded as research participants. This would be ensured by dealing with each unique person before attempting to understand their experiences of working in academia. This is because it is assumed that people have issues, and that the adoption of Lekgotla will assist in understanding or contextualising those issues.

During the process of academic Lekgotla, the principles of respect, full participation, consensus and collective decision making would be applied. All would be welcome to give their input irrespective of their status, gender, age and general characteristics. Emphasis would be placed on respect for all and value for each other's contribution. It is only when a consensus is reached on one point that the participants would move to another point of discussion. A decision would not come from one person but would be collective. According

to Masemola (Personal communication, August, 09 2018), "*Taba ga e fetse ke motho, e fetsa ke rena. Ga se nna, ga se wena, ke rena ka moka, re ema ka lona*". This is the overall spirit of Ubuntu that Ramose (2002a) refers to. As part of the closure, the researcher and the participants would converse and reflect on the discussion, thanking and acknowledging everybody involved. In line with the spirit of Ubuntu, the researcher/ facilitator may propose to meet with the participants to share her conversational understanding of what emerged from the Lekgotla.

On reflection, the adoption of academic Lekgotla when compared to Lekgotla as adopted and applied in traditional contexts such as, for example South African villages, reflects how dynamic and process-oriented Lekgotla as an indigenous intervention is. This further highlights the importance of always respecting and remembering the context of Lekgotla. In addition, the application of academic Lekgotla offers an opportunity of equal participation by allowing diverse academics to converse about their positive experiences in a respectful, humane manner where everybody's input is regarded as critical. This also entails facilitating the positive experiences of working in academia as an expansion of *other science*. By so doing "we are redefining the discipline of science itself, let alone psychology and consequently reclaiming the "tools of knowing" that were modified, dismissed and/or distorted under colonisation" (Nobles, 1986, p. 110).

Chapter Summary

This chapter described and discussed a proposed framework or model for understanding positive experiences of working in academia holistically. This was carried out through a meta-reflection on the empirical research process. A traditional measuring tool approach which is consistent with the paradigms adopted in the research was described and interrogated. The deconstruction of understanding positive experiences of working in

academia by applying Lekgotla as an indigenous South African model was proposed and explained. Healy's (2011) transformative dialogue and Bujo's (1998) model of palaver were used as a framework within which Lekgotla could be contextualised.

Conclusion

Introduction

This thesis focused on exploring positive experiences of working in academia in the context of an Open Distance Learning (ODL) higher education institution. Here I will highlight the initial orientation of the study, and identify contradictions at the epistemological, methodological, and practical levels and their implications. In conclusion, I will discuss decolonisation as a recommendation to be considered and applied in future research on positive experiences of working in academia. I will further share the practical implications of Lekgotla as an example of a decolonisation process that was adopted in the study.

Reorientation of the Research

Under section 1.2, I elaborated on my encounter with Prof Cameron. My interaction with her encouraged me to embark on a journey in which I sought to understand positive experiences of working in academia by focusing on why academics such as her seemed to thrive in academia. This is because the academic environment is characterised by internal factors (establishing and managing high quality teaching and learning experiences for students) and external factors (globalisation, increased application of advanced information technology in all aspects of higher education, and policy changes) that sometimes result in stressors and burnout among academics.The reason for concentrating on academics was that they are regarded as significant stakeholders who contribute to the core business of higher institutions where they conduct their unique work which consists of teaching and learning, research, academic citizenship and community engagement.

The study was also envisaged to serve as the foundation for future studies that aim to develop a measuring tool for understanding positive experiences of working in academia in the South African context which has diverse cultural and language groups. Through adopting the humanistic framework and positive psychology paradigm, the research approach emphasised integrated positive experiences of working in academia by taking into account the impact of personal characteristics and environmental factors. The positive experiences were explored though a purposive sampling process and by the participants qualitatively sharing their personal positive experiences through an in-depth face-to-face interviewing process.

Identified Contradictions of the Study

A meta-reflection on the research revealed contradictions in the theoretical approach adopted in this study, the literature reviewed, the empirical research and pragmatic considerations. The significance of these contradictions is that they function to highlight shortfalls that I did not foresee during the planning of the study. These gaps are assumed to be telling us something about a possible mismatch between the dynamics of the world we live in, and the general research processes conducted (Smith, 2012).

From the theoretical overview and literature reviewed, the authenticity of the conceptualisation process of what positive experiences are in a diverse African university was emphasised. This is due to the fact that almost all modern universities promote unilateral western thinking and this is contrary to the meaning and purpose of universities (M. B. Ramose, 2004). Ramose's (2004) view is that, in universities, not one but many stories should be told. The implication is therefore to encourage diverse knowledge systems in universities so that students can learn to recognise and apply indigenous interventions which are applicable in their African contexts. At a methodological level, the issue of data analysis

was highlighted as contributing to the misinterpretation of information. What we learn from the identified contradictions is that research in diverse contexts such as the context of African universities requires a different approach in the form of originality.

The research results suggest a wholistic approach in generating a different understanding of the positive experiences of working in academia. This approach could be within an epistemology that supports Bujo's (2003) argument that Africans do not think in either/or terms, but rather in both/and categories. As a result, the implication of adopting a different epistemology would also be linked to a different methodology and method.

Decoloniality as an Alternative Way Forward

Given the contradictions that emerged from the meta reflection of the research in Chapter 6, the next relevant question is: What is the way forward? As an alternative, higher learning institutions could adopt other ways that are different from western ways of understanding the authentic experiences of diverse people in an African university. This could be adopted through a process of what Smith (2012) described as "considering carefully and critically the methodologies and methods of research, the theories that inform them, the questions which they generate and the writing styles they employ" (p. 41). She refers to this process as decolonisation. According to her, decolonisation offers an alternative to colonialism since it exists as a different, oppositional way of knowing.

Authors such as Baloyi (2008), E. Fourie and Terre Blanche (2018), Ramose (2004) Higgs (2010b) and Mignolo (2009) have written about decolonisation as a necessity in current higher learning institutions that could bring transformation of the different *products* that are being offered. Smith's (2012) understanding and description of decolonisation is preferred in this study because she is regarded as one of the prominent indigenous

international researchers from New Zealand who has also published a valuable and relevant book titled: *Decolonizing Methodologies: research and indigenous people* for researchers (indigenous and non-indigenous) working in indigenous communities and academia. Her work is not only regarded as appropriate but as binding and relevant to the different colonised researchers or academics that are going through a struggle of freeing themselves from what Ramose (2004) regarded as epistemological exclusion and Mignolo (2009) regarded as epistemic disobedience.

In support of Smith's adoption of decolonisation, Okere et al. (2005) emphasised the view that "all knowledge is first of all local knowledge" (p. 1). This implies that we first learn what we know from our own immediate systems such as, for example, our culture, before we can learn from other different cultures. In addition, Higgs (2010b) argued that indigenous African epistemology or knowledge systems that originate from an African philosophy with a distinctive African epistemic identity are relevant and necessary. According to Higgs, relevance must be understood by acknowledging the historical context of the colonisation of Africa. Higgs's views are emphasised within the domain of philosophy, and since philosophy is a study of the theory of knowledge about many things, I think that the rationale could therefore be extended to other fields of study such as psychology in this instance. It is envisaged that, since a traditional European university does not promote or address other ways of knowing effectively, a decolonised university that focuses on expanding our knowledge to include other cultures, theories, methodologies and concepts is deemed necessary.

The application of Lekgotla as an example of decolonisation. The reason Lekgotla was adopted in this research was to intervene differently in understanding positive experiences of working in academia. At a practical level, it could facilitate the co-construction of knowledge by gathering data through a conversational approach with the

different participants. As a result, it gives rise to a possible practice that could be adopted going forward in other research. In particular, Lekgotla, as a South African indigenous intervention/method, seems to promote a decolonisation process. This is because, during the application of Lekgotla, one follows a consultative and collaborative approach. It further adopts a communal approach which is process-oriented, and is therefore not predetermined. It thus provides the possibility of at least one non-western methodology that researchers in South Africa and other cultural contexts can employ to ensure their research does not continue the traditions of epistemological exclusion and injustice that plague current research.

Importantly in this context, Lekgotla assists in redefining the role of a researcher from that of an expert to an equal who has to work together with fellow research participants to arrive at knowledge. This is supported by E. Fourie and Terre Blanche (2018) who emphasised the shift of power dynamics as one of the characteristics of decolonisation. In conclusion, this research adopts Lekgotla as a relevant and necessary African indigenous intervention that could assist in the understanding of positive experiences of working in academia in a way that is likely to be more authentic and less impositional. It has further demonstrated the recognition of the indigenous cultural base and helped to address the issue of transformation which is of real significance in higher education.

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Appendix A: Ethical clearance certificate from Department of Psychology at Unisa

Appendix B: Interview brief

Title: The positive experiences of working in academia: reflection in a higher learning context
Researcher: Molebogeng (Lebo) Makobe-Rabothata, 5-42 Department of Psychology, Theo van Wyk Building, Unisa, 0003

Purpose of the study

This research is part of my PHD thesis. The primary aim of the study is to explore the positive experiences of academic employees working in an academic environment with specific reference to an ODL institution. These positive experiences will be explored during the qualitative phase by providing a context in which academics can share their personal positive experiences. Thereafter, during the quantitative phase, the study will develop a potential measuring instrument of positive experiences in an ODL institution.

Procedures

You will be interviewed through a face-to-face process during which you will be asked to share your positive experiences of working in academia.

I will be using an audio recorder to record our interview conversation. This will assist me to analyse information accurately from our conversation. I will send you the transcripts from our conversation so that you can provide feedback on whether the transcripts captured exactly what we discussed.

Confidentiality

No person will be allowed to make copies of the original data in audio or written form. Data will only be used in the doctoral thesis as intended to help understand the positive experiences of working in academia. All information obtained from you during the interview will be kept strictly confidential.

Your interview transcript will be numbered during the analysis phase. Your name (or any other information that may identify you as a participant) will not be used directly in any report.

Voluntary nature of participation

Your participation will be invaluable to this research study as it will help to understand positive experiences of working in academia. Your participation is, however, voluntary. Accordingly, you may refuse to participate or may discontinue your participation at any time during the interview.

Information about this study

For further questions about this study, you can contact the researcher using the contact information provided in this document at (012) 429 8099/ makobmk@unisa.ac.za

Appendix C: Informed Consent form

INFORMED CONSENT FORM
Title: The positive experiences of working in academia: Reflections at a higher learning institution.

Voluntary participation

I have been informed that I may, at any stage, withdraw my consent and participation in the study.

Permission to record the interview

I allow the researcher to use an audio recorder to record our interview conversation.

Confidentiality

It was explained to me that information that I provide will be kept confidential and that the interview results will be processed in a doctoral thesis.

Nature of the study

I hereby confirm that I have been informed about the nature and conduct of this study.

Respondent's name: ……(please print)

Respondent's signature:……..

Date:……..

I **Molebogeng Makobe-Rabothata** as the researcher of study hereby confirm that the above participant has been briefed about the aim and conduct of the study.

Interviewer's signature:……..

Date:…….